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February 1, 1996

The Honorable Paul Patton
Governor of Kentucky
The Capitol
700 Capital Avenue
Frankfort, KY 40601

Dear Governor Patton:

The purpose of my letter is to voice my support for your efforts to pass legislation in the Kentucky General Assembly to prohibit the sale of tobacco products to minors. Your efforts prove that even tobacco producing states are willing to effectively deal with the issue without the need for excessive federal regulation.

Although Kentucky contains the largest burley tobacco growing regions in the country, all of us understand the wisdom of preventing children from smoking. However, we dread recent efforts aimed at giving the Food and Drug Administration regulatory responsibility for tobacco products. Such efforts are wrongheaded and would do irreparable harm to the economies of states such as Kentucky.

Indeed, studies show that even smokers don't want their kids to smoke. I am deeply concerned with the issue of teen smoking, and I think we must take strong steps to prevent them from forming this habit. At the same time, however, I am also concerned about the impact of the potential FDA regulation on Kentucky's agricultural economy.

I believe Senate Bill 137 balances these concerns. In fact, SB 137 provides a comprehensive and realistic remedy for combating teenage smoking in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. It imposes, for the first time, significant penalties and fines for the sale and distribution of tobacco products to minors. The legislation also contains a sound enforcement mechanism designed to ensure compliance. It also provides a strategy and timeframe for achieving the goal of combatting youth smoking.

More importantly, SB 137 builds upon the framework outlined in the recently proposed SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) regulations. I believe your legislation will serve as a national model for what states can do to prohibit the sale of tobacco products to children. It is my hope that your legislation, and similar legislation introduced by Senator Wendell Ford and myself on the Congressional level, will serve to derail efforts by the FDA to assume regulatory control over tobacco.

Thank you for taking the lead on this matter.

Sincerely,

Scotty Baesler
Member of Congress



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