



April 16, 2015

San Francisco Board of Supervisors  
City Hall, 1 Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, California 94102

Honorable Board of Supervisors,

The use of smokeless tobacco remains a serious blot on the game of baseball. Smokeless tobacco use by Major League Baseball (MLB) players endangers the health of impressionable youth who follow their lead, as well as the players themselves. We are excited that San Francisco has the opportunity to become the first city in the nation to make baseball completely tobacco-free, by passing Supervisor Mark Farrell's ordinance to prohibit all tobacco-related products – including smokeless tobacco (such as dip, chew and snuff) – at stadiums, sports arenas and playing fields across San Francisco.

Passage of this ordinance will make clear that the health of our youth is a top priority. Such legislation will send a simple and powerful message to kids: baseball and tobacco don't mix. Our national pastime should be about promoting a healthy and active lifestyle, not a product that addicts, sickens and kills.

At the local launch of the Knock Tobacco Out of the Park campaign, one of the youngsters in attendance said that he has friends who "think it's really cool to be like the pros and have a big wad in their mouth." Another 10-year-old Little Leaguer shared, "When I see players on TV chewing tobacco, I am sad and confused. It must be really, really hard to stop, and it would be so great if they were doing something healthier, like eating sunflower seeds or chewing gum."

With sentiments like these, it should come as no surprise that even as smoking among boys has fallen by 25 percent in the last decade, smokeless tobacco use has remained troublingly steady. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2013, 14.7 percent of high school boys (and 8.8 percent of all high school students) reported current use of smokeless tobacco products. Each year, about 535,000 kids age 12-17 use smokeless tobacco for the first time.

**Knock Tobacco Out of the Park**  
1400 I Street NW, Suite 1200  
Washington, DC 20005  
[www.tobaccofreebaseball.org](http://www.tobaccofreebaseball.org)



Major league players are idolized by millions of our young people who watch baseball and see players, coaches and managers using tobacco. Baseball must stop creating images that associate tobacco use with masculinity and athleticism – when in fact it is associated with death and disease. The obvious solution is for owners and the players association to agree to a ban, but they have not done so. Since baseball has been unable to address this threat to kids across the country, it is now up to cities and states with major league teams – like San Francisco – to step up to the plate and protect our kids by prohibiting use of all tobacco products, including smokeless tobacco, at baseball venues.

Two shocking events in 2014 should have been enough to convince MLB and its players to remove the indelible stain smokeless tobacco has left on the game. Last June, Hall of Famer Tony Gwynn died at age 54 after a long battle with salivary gland cancer, which he attributed to his longtime use of chewing tobacco. Two months later, pitching great Curt Schilling, only 47, announced his treatment for oral cancer that he said was “without a doubt, unquestionably” caused by 30 years of chewing tobacco.

Tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of death in the United States. Public health authorities, including the U.S. Surgeon General and National Cancer Institute, have found that smokeless tobacco use is hazardous to health and can lead to nicotine addiction. Smokeless tobacco contains at least 28 cancer-causing chemicals and causes oral, pancreatic and esophageal cancer – as well as other health problems.

We are up against some powerful opposition. Smokeless tobacco companies spent \$450 million on marketing in 2011 (the most recent year available), more than three times the amount spent in 1998. Smokeless tobacco use in baseball reinforces the industry’s message that teen boys can’t be real men unless they chew. We need to do our part to counter this deceptive messaging.

The proposed ordinance does not dictate what players can do on their own time in their personal lives, although we would urge players to quit using tobacco for their own health. Baseball stadiums, however, are workplaces and public places. It is totally fitting to limit the use of a harmful substance in that type of venue. While players are on the job – on the field or anywhere in their stadium – they have a responsibility to set the right example for kids. We recognize that this change will pose a challenge for some, so the ordinance specifies that it will not become effective until after the upcoming season is over.

What we are urging is not unprecedented. The minor leagues, the NCAA and the National Hockey League have already instituted prohibitions on tobacco use. Major League Baseball is lagging on this. So for the sake of the children and families who love baseball and look up to their heroes, and for the sake of the health of the players



themselves, we ask that you quickly pass Supervisor Farrell's ordinance and help us take the first step toward create a tobacco-free national pastime.

Earlier efforts to eliminate tobacco from baseball made some strides – including a prohibition on players carrying tobacco tins in their uniforms and using smokeless tobacco during TV interviews. But these restrictions have not eliminated smokeless tobacco use at ballparks – the step that can best prevent young people from ever starting down the road to addiction, disease and premature death. It is time, finally, to take tobacco out of baseball completely. Progress cannot wait.

Sincerely,

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network  
American Heart Association  
American Lung Association  
California Medical Association  
Breathe California/Golden Gate Public Health Partnership  
San Francisco Parks Alliance  
San Francisco Tobacco-Free Coalition  
San Francisco Medical Society  
San Francisco Dental Society  
San Francisco Dental Hygiene Society  
San Francisco Young Democrats  
Asian Pacific Democratic Club  
Common Sense Media