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Council Member Corey Johnson to Introduce Legislation to Make MLB Baseball, Other Ticketed Sporting Events Tobacco-Free

Leading Health Experts Praise Needed Proposal That Will Protect Kids and Players

City Hall — At today’s Stated Meeting, NYC Council Health Committee Chair Corey Johnson will introduce legislation that would **eliminate the use of smokeless tobacco products at all ticketed baseball stadiums, sports arenas and recreation areas in New York**, both to set the right example for America’s youth and for the health of the players.

The legislation will send a simple and powerful message to kids with the 2016 season just two months away: baseball and tobacco don’t mix.

Public health advocates join Council Member Johnson in announcing the latest leg of the “Knock Tobacco Out of the Park” campaign to promote tobacco-free baseball and help reduce smokeless tobacco use among kids. San Francisco, Boston and Los Angeles have enacted similar legislation that will take effect before the new season starts in April.

Health authorities have found that smokeless tobacco use is hazardous to health and can lead to nicotine addiction. Smokeless tobacco contains at least 28 known carcinogens and causes oral, pancreatic and esophageal cancer – as well as other serious health problems such as gum disease, tooth decay and mouth lesions.

Recent headlines have driven home the seriousness of the problem. In June 2014, 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.

“There may not be many baseball issues where Mets and Yankees fans can agree, but this certainly is one of them.” said **Council Member Johnson**. “Smokeless tobacco use in baseball and other sports should be a thing of the past. By allowing smokeless tobacco at the ballparks, we are sending mixed signals about the dangers of tobacco use. It’s time to take tobacco out of the game completely for the good of baseball and for the health of our kids and players alike.”

According to a report issued in September by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), high school athletes use smokeless tobacco at nearly twice the rate of non-athletes (11.1 percent compared to 5.9 percent in 2013), and smokeless tobacco use among athletes increased from 2001 to 2013 (from 10 percent to 11.1 percent), even as smoking rates dropped significantly. Among male high school athletes, smokeless tobacco use is particularly alarming at 17.4 percent in 2013.

Even as cigarette use continues a steady decline among youth, smokeless tobacco use has remained troublingly steady. Overall, according to the 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.

Johnson’s proposal will apply to baseball games and other sporting events at all levels within city limits that require a ticket for admission and will cover players, fans and anyone in the entire venue during a baseball game or other sports or recreation activity. The law would become effective 120 days after final passage, meaning it could take effect during the 2016 MLB season.

“Our national pastime should be about promoting a healthy and active lifestyle, not a deadly and addictive product,” said **Matthew L. Myers, President of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids**. “Today’s announcement keeps the momentum on our side to finally get tobacco out of baseball for kids, the players and the future. Today’s action in New York will help achieve our goal of making the next generation tobacco-free.”

Smokeless tobacco companies spent more than \$435 million on marketing in 2012 (the most recent year available), which is almost three times the amount they spent in 1998.

Last May, San Francisco became the first city in the nation to prohibit the use of all tobacco products at all baseball venues and athletic fields within the city and county of San Francisco, including by fans and players at AT&T Park. The Board of Supervisors passed the ordinance unanimously, and the law took effect January 1, 2016.

For years, leading health organizations have called for an end to smokeless tobacco in baseball. A number of groups mounted a major campaign in 2010-2011 that made some significant strides – including securing a prohibition on players carrying tobacco tins in their uniforms and using smokeless tobacco during TV interviews. But these restrictions did not eliminate smokeless tobacco use at ballparks.

More information on the Knock Tobacco Out of the Park campaign can be found at tobaccofreebaseball.org. The website includes tools that allow fans and other members of the

public to send messages to MLB and the Players Association telling them to get tobacco out of baseball. Baseball fans in New York (Mets and Yankees enthusiasts alike) can contact their elected officials and urge them to support the measure announced today to make baseball tobacco-free.

"Major League Baseball has long supported a ban of smokeless tobacco at the Major League level and the New York Yankees fully support the proposed Local Law to amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York pertaining to prohibiting the use of smokeless tobacco at ticketed sports arenas and recreation areas." - **New York Yankees, Team Statement**

“The New York Mets join Major League Baseball in the support of the local law to ban smokeless tobacco in New York ticketed arenas, stadiums and ballparks. Preventing children from being exposed to smokeless tobacco is an important initiative and we are glad to play our part in achieving this important goal. We look forward to reviewing this legislation. ” **Statement by the Mets Organization**