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Reality Check Youth Bring Tobacco Education to Albany

Long Island, NY- On February 25th, teens from the Southampton Youth Bureau joined Reality Check youth from across the state to help educate legislators about tobacco issues that are impacting their communities. In particular, the youth spoke about the presence of local tobacco marketing at pharmacies and convenience stores and the impact it has in their community.

With 90% of all smokers starting before the age of 18, preventing youth from picking up the first one is a major step in ending tobacco use. The majority of tobacco marketing happens behind the counter and on the walls of convenience stores. The Surgeon General has stated that this is a known cause of youth smoking.

Jason Ambrose of Mercy McGann Catholic School and Sam Mustafa of Southampton Middle School met with several legislators including Southampton Assemblymen Fred Thiele, Jr. “Our hope is to help make our communities healthier...if youth don’t start to smoke, than they never have to struggle to try and quit” said Jason.

The effects of secondhand smoke was also a topic during the visits with legislators. “It’s upsetting to see people smoke at the park or carnival. There are little kids all around who shouldn’t have to breathe in that smoke” said Sam.

Reality Check LI regularly works youth groups such as the Southampton Youth Bureau to help empower teens to become lead voices in shifting the social norm away from smoking and creating healthier communities.

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Reality Check is a New York State youth-led, adult supported group against the deceptive marketing practices of the tobacco industry and the way they market their products towards youth.

Reality Check LI is part of the **Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island** which is funded by the NY Tobacco Control Program through a grant administered by the American Lung Association of the Northeast.