State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
State House, Room 224
Providence, Rhode Island 02903
401-222-2080

Lincoln D. Chafee
Governor

June 20, 2012

TO THE HONORABLE, THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

In accordance with the provisions of Section 14, Article IX of the Constitution of the State of Rhode Island and Section 43-1-4 of the Rhode Island General Laws, I transmit, with my disapproval, 2012 H 7606, "An Act Relating to Criminal Offenses - Children."

This bill would make both community service and entrance into a tobacco treatment program mandatory for minors who possess or use tobacco. Many advocacy groups, including the American Lung Association, the Parent Support Network, the RI Council of Community Mental Health Organizations, the RI ACLU, the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Association of RI, the Mental Health Association of RI, and the RI Tobacco Control Network, have requested a veto of this legislation based on its requirement for mandatory tobacco treatment for minors.

By making mandatory treatment for youth who may or may not be addicted, this bill would direct scarce resources from where they are most needed—people with serious tobacco addictions. In the experience of the experts and community groups noted above, voluntary treatment programs for those who want to quit are the most effective in reducing tobacco use. Additionally, increasing penalties for underage tobacco possession distracts from illegal selling and advertising of tobacco products to minors. The goal of reducing youth tobacco use is a laudable one, but this legislation does not move the state in the right direction.

For these reason, I disapprove of this legislation and respectfully urge your support of this veto.

Sincerely,

Lincoln D. Chafee