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WCVB-TV

Group sues supermarket chain, accuses of selling lottery tickets to minors

Lawsuit filed against Star Markets; letter sent to Stop & Shop

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BOSTON —Northeastern University's Public Health Advocacy Institute has filed a lawsuit against the Star Markets grocery store chain, accusing the company of violating the Massachusetts Consumer Protection Act by allowing the sale of lottery tickets to children.

According to the lawsuit, Craig Kelley, a Cambridge city councilor, gave his 14-year-old son permission to try and purchase lottery tickets from vending machines at two supermarkets in September 2014.

The complaint says the teenager was able to purchase lottery tickets from the Star Market stores at Porter Square in Cambridge and Beacon Street in Somerville using the lottery ticket vending machines. In both instances, the lawsuit claims no store personnel questioned the teenager.

The complaint argues that Star Markets positions lottery ticket vending machines in its stores in a manner that entices minors. The lawsuit says in each store the teenager entered, the lottery ticket vending machine was located next to displays for candy, soda and snack foods.

The lawsuit seeks the removal of lottery ticket vending machines from Star Market stores or, alternatively, rules allowing vending machine sales only after a customer's age has been established.

The group has also sent a letter to Stop & Shop, claiming it also violated Massachusetts laws by allowing the same minor to purchase a lottery ticket using a lottery ticket vending machine inside its Arlington store.

The group said it filed the lawsuit on behalf of the Kelley family and the Stop Predatory Gambling Foundation, which says its mission is "to end the unfairness and inequality created by government-sponsored gambling."