



January 23, 2018

Distinguished Members of the Cook County Board,

Tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States. In Illinois, smoking claims the lives of 18,300 residents each year.<sup>i</sup> There are 230,000 Illinois children who are alive now that will die prematurely due to smoking-related disease.<sup>ii</sup> The annual health care costs in Illinois directly caused by smoking are \$5.49 billion.<sup>iii</sup> Illinois can do better. We want to improve these numbers.

Increasing the sale age for tobacco products to 21, or Tobacco 21, is a promising intervention as a complimentary part of a comprehensive tobacco control strategy to reduce death and suffering from tobacco-related illnesses. Other important efforts include regular and significant tobacco tax increases, comprehensive smoke-free workplace laws, and fully funded tobacco cessation and prevention programs reduce youth initiation and help tobacco users quit.

National research shows that 95% of adult smokers start before they turn 21.<sup>iv</sup> This time period is when the brain is fully developing, including the parts responsible for decision making, impulse control, sensation seeking, and susceptibility to peer pressure.<sup>v</sup> Adolescents and young adults are therefore a critical population to target with evidenced-based, tobacco control strategies.

According to a March 2015 Institute of Medicine report- *Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products*<sup>vi</sup>, raising the national minimum legal sale age to 21 is predicted to reduce smoking prevalence by about 12 percent and smoking related deaths by nearly 10 percent for future generations.

The report authors predicted that raising the national minimum age of sale for tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes, will prevent tobacco use, reduce suffering and death from tobacco-related diseases and save lives among the next generation of Americans. Increasing the sale age for tobacco products to 21 would be a significant step towards further reducing tobacco use in Illinois. Restricting youth and young adult access to tobacco products can be a critical component to a comprehensive strategy to reduce initiation and a lifelong addiction.<sup>vii</sup>

It is important to note that it takes more than just changing from 18 to 21 in existing statutes for the desired health benefits to be reached. An effective Tobacco 21 law will include all tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes, while not creating new categories of products. Finally, providing a comprehensive definition of “tobacco products” can aid in compliance and enforcement by clearly specifying exactly which products are included in the law.

Tobacco companies heavily target young adults ages 18 to 21 through a variety of marketing activities—sponsoring music and sporting events, bar promotions, college marketing programs, college scholarships and parties—because they know it is a critical time-period for solidifying tobacco addiction.

Increasing the age for sale of tobacco products to 21 will help counter the tobacco industry's efforts to target young people at a critical time when many move from experimenting with tobacco to regular use. It will also help keep tobacco out of high schools, where younger teens often obtain tobacco products from older students.

As of January 2019, six states and over 400 localities nationwide have already passed laws to raise the minimum age of sale of tobacco products to 21. Communities in Illinois have passed their own tobacco 21 ordinances in Evanston, Chicago, Oak Park, Highland Park, Naperville, Deerfield, Maywood, Lincolnshire, Vernon Hills, Berwyn, Buffalo Grove, Unincorporated Lake County, Elk Grove Village, Mundelein, Riverwoods, Bolingbrook, Wilmette, Gurnee, Hopkins Park, Aurora, Washington, Glen Ellyn, Peoria, Hanover Park, Skokie, Wheaton, Carol Stream, West Chicago, Elgin, Barrington, Hoffman Estates, Downers Grove, Normal, Lake Zurich, Park Ridge, and Arlington Heights. This represents over a third of the state that is covered by a local ordinance. It's time for Cook County to raise the age of sale for tobacco products to 21.

Tobacco 21 will make it harder for young adults and adolescents to access and become addicted to cigarettes and other tobacco products. This ordinance is the next step of a comprehensive tobacco control strategy that will save lives and money. We urge your support.

Please feel free to contact me at 309.645.6909 or [shana.crews@cancer.org](mailto:shana.crews@cancer.org) for more information.

Sincerely,

*Shana Jo Crews*

Illinois Government Relations Director  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

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<sup>i</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The Toll of Tobacco in Illinois. Updated October 6, 2018.  
[https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts\\_issues/toll\\_us/illinois](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/toll_us/illinois)

<sup>ii</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The Toll of Tobacco in Illinois. Updated October 6, 2017.  
[https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts\\_issues/toll\\_us/illinois](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/toll_us/illinois)

<sup>iii</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The Toll of Tobacco in Illinois. Updated October 6, 2017.  
[https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts\\_issues/toll\\_us/illinois](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/toll_us/illinois)

<sup>iv</sup> United States Department of Health and Human Services. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2014. ICPSR36361-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2016-03-22. <http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR36361.v1>; see also Institute of Medicine, *Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products*, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2015, <http://iom.nationalacademies.org/Reports/2015/TobaccoMinimumAgeReport.aspx>. Retrieved August 3, 2016 from <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0376.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Prevention Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012.

<sup>vi</sup> [http://iom.nationalacademies.org/~media/Files/Report%20Files/2015/TobaccoMinAge/tobacco\\_minimum\\_age\\_report\\_brief.pdf](http://iom.nationalacademies.org/~media/Files/Report%20Files/2015/TobaccoMinAge/tobacco_minimum_age_report_brief.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> Guide to Community Preventive Services. Community mobilization with additional interventions to restrict minors' access to tobacco products. [www.thecommunityguide.org/tobacco/communityinterventions.html](http://www.thecommunityguide.org/tobacco/communityinterventions.html). June 2001.