

**RAISING THE MINIMUM LEGAL SALES AGE OF  
TOBACCO AND NICOTINE DELIVERY PRODUCTS TO 21  
YEARS OF AGE**

A call for advocacy, research, health education and promotion activities directed to create policies to reduce smoking rates

Adopted by the Minnesota Society for Public Health Education Executive Committee

November 16, 2018



WHEREAS, tobacco use is the foremost preventable cause of premature death in the United States,<sup>1</sup> responsible for approximately 480,000 deaths a year,<sup>2</sup> with 20 million premature deaths attributed to smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke in the U.S. over the past 50 years since the first Surgeon General's report on smoking in 1964;<sup>3</sup>

WHEREAS, the annual economic impact of smoking in the U.S. is more than \$300 billion in health care and lost worker productivity costs;<sup>4</sup>

WHEREAS, national data show that 95 percent of adult smokers begin smoking before they turn 21, and that the ages of 18 to 21 are a critical period when many smokers move from experimental smoking to regular, daily use;<sup>5</sup>

WHEREAS, the developing brains of young people are particularly susceptible to the addictive properties of nicotine,<sup>6</sup> and tobacco industry documents show that those who start smoking by the age of 18 are almost twice as likely to become lifetime smokers as those who start after they turn 21;<sup>7</sup>

WHEREAS, electronic smoking device use among minors has recently tripled and continues to grow in popularity surpassing current use in every other tobacco product including cigarettes;<sup>8</sup>

WHEREAS, a 2015 Institute of Medicine report concluded that raising the minimum legal sales age for tobacco products nationwide would reduce tobacco initiation, particularly among adolescents aged 15 to 17, and that it would improve health across the lifespan and save lives; and that raising the minimum legal sales age for tobacco products to 21 nationwide would, over time, lead to a 12 percent decrease in smoking prevalence;<sup>9</sup>

WHEREAS, the Institute of Medicine also predicted that raising the minimum legal sales age for tobacco products to 21 nationwide would result in 223,000 fewer premature deaths, 50,000 fewer deaths from lung cancer, and 4.2 million fewer years of life lost for those born between 2000 and 2019, and that it would result in near immediate reductions in preterm birth, low birth weight, and sudden infant death syndrome;<sup>9</sup>

WHEREAS, a growing number of communities and states have enacted laws mandating a minimum legal sales age for tobacco products to 21,<sup>10</sup>

WHEREAS, three-quarters of U.S. adults favor raising the minimum age of sale for tobacco products to 21, including seven in ten smokers;<sup>11</sup>

WHEREAS, the retail impact of ordinances mandating a minimum legal sales age of 21 for tobacco products is minimal, with an estimated decrease of only 2% of total tobacco sales;<sup>12</sup>

THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED: that MN SOPHE will advocate and support comprehensive tobacco laws as outlined by the Tobacco Control Network's 2016 Policy Recommendations Guide<sup>13</sup> to raise the minimum legal sales age for tobacco and nicotine delivery products to 21.

RESOLVED that MN SOPHE will increase professional and public education on the benefits and importance of raising the minimum legal sales age for tobacco and nicotine delivery products to 21;

RESOLVED that MN SOPHE encourage participation in community coalitions to advocate for raising the minimum legal sales, purchase, and use age for tobacco and nicotine delivery products to be consistent with the alcohol policy in their respective communities.

#### References

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