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## BOARD OF HEALTH

**Chairman:**  
 Judith A. Sartucci  
 Rocky Hill, CT

**TO:** Co-Chairs and Members of the Public Health Committee

**DATE:** March 9, 2018

**Vice-Chairman:**  
 Patricia Checko  
 Berlin, CT

**RE: Testimony regarding S.B. No. 164 AN ACT RAISING THE LEGAL AGE TO PURCHASE TOBACCO TO TWENTY-ONE.**

**Secretary-Treasurer:**  
 Charles K. Brown, Jr.  
 Director of Health

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Board of Health of the Central Connecticut Health District (CCHD). CCHD is one of 20 regional local health departments in Connecticut, known as "health districts". Our agency serves nearly 98,000 people in our four member towns of Berlin, Newington, Rocky Hill, and Wethersfield.

**John F. Aforismo**  
 Wethersfield, CT

On behalf of the Health District and its Board of Directors, we would like to provide testimony in support of SB 164 to increase the legal age for purchase and use of tobacco products to 21.

**Ann Marie Diloreto**  
 Wethersfield, CT

The initiation age of tobacco use is critical. Among adults who become daily smokers, approximately 90 percent report first use of cigarettes before reaching 19 years of age, and almost 100 percent report first use before age 26. Early age of initiation is associated with greater levels of nicotine dependence and increased risk of illness. In an evaluation of the implications of raising the minimum age of legal access to tobacco products the Institute of Medicine concluded that overall, increasing the Minimum Legal Age (MLA) for tobacco products will likely prevent or delay initiation of tobacco use by adolescents and young adults. The age group most impacted will be those age 15 to 17 years. The committee also concluded that the impact of raising the MLA to 21 will likely be substantially higher than raising it to 19.

**Deborah P. Henault**  
 Wethersfield, CT

They also reported that raising the age to 21 would:

**Raymond Jarema**  
 Berlin, CT

- Reducing the smoking rate by about 12%
- Reduces smoking-related deaths by 10%
- Avoid 223,000 premature deaths
- Improve maternal and child health and reduce adverse maternal, fetal and infant outcomes

**Jerilyn Nagel**  
 Newington, CT

**John Richter**  
 Newington, CT

**Michele Sadlosky**  
 Newington, CT

Increasing the MLA also has the effect of reducing tobacco initiation. The last CT Youth Tobacco survey noted that 1 in 5 high school students (20%) were using some form of tobacco by their senior year. Connecticut data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System also reported that young adults 18-24 and 25-34 have the highest tobacco use rates, with prevalence rates of 30.5% and 20.3% respectively. Raising the MLA can have the dramatic effect of reducing the number of young adults who begin to use tobacco products, and therefore, reduce the number of users by reducing the potential for long term addiction. If current trends continue, 5.6 million of today's youth will die prematurely from a tobacco-related disease.

**Lia Safalow**  
 Rocky Hill, CT

**Marti Stiglich**  
 Rocky Hill, CT

**Carolyn Wysocki**  
 Berlin, CT

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important bill affecting local public health and our agency.

Sincerely,

Judith A. Sartucci, MSN, RN  
 Chairman, Board of Health

Charles K. Brown Jr., MPH  
 Board Secretary/Treasurer  
 And District Director of Health



**Public Health**  
 Prevent. Promote. Protect.