

Public Health Committee
Tuesday, March 20, 2018
Senate Bill 164 AA Raising the Legal Age To Purchase Tobacco To
Twenty One
Lisa Kimmel on behalf of the American Heart Association

Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Steinberg, and Members of the Committee, thank you for providing me with the opportunity to comment in support of SB 164, AA Raising the Legal Age for Purchase and use of Tobacco Product. I am the Director of Wellness and Health Education for Yale University and am testifying today on behalf of the American Heart Association.

In Connecticut, 10.3% of high school students smoke and 7.2% of them use e-cigarettes. Big Tobacco continues to win as 1,300 kids under the age of 18 become new daily smokers each year. Our state continues to lose as 27% of our cancer deaths are attributable to smoking; 4,900 adults die each year from their own smoking and 56,000 of our children, now under the age of 18, will eventually die from their own tobacco use. These statistics are staggering and unacceptable. Leading the Tobacco Free Yale Initiative and being the mother of a two teenagers, I am doing my part to educate my children and students about the detrimental effects of tobacco use, but I am depending on my State of Connecticut to reinforce this message by increasing the legal age for purchase to 21 for ALL tobacco products. The use of all tobacco products is detrimental to health, not only for those who use these products, but also for those exposed to second hand effects.

Financially, our state's annual health care costs directly caused by smoking are \$2.03 billion and Medicaid costs are \$520.8 million. Smoking-caused productivity loses in Connecticut are \$1.25 billion annually. We CANNOT afford to continue to pay this price.

Most teens who smoke and use tobacco report getting cigarettes and other products from their friends; 90% of those who provide cigarettes to younger teens are under the age of 21. The parts of the brain most responsible for decision making, impulse control, sensation seeking, and susceptibility to peer pressure continue to develop and change through young adulthood. Adolescent brains are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of nicotine and nicotine addiction. This is why 80% of youth smokers will become adult smokers. One-half of adult smokers will die prematurely from tobacco-related diseases. This is unacceptable and avoidable.

The tobacco sales age is currently 21 in California, Hawaii, Maine, New Jersey, and Oregon. Many major cities have increased the sales age as well, including New York City, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Portland (Maine), Albany (New York), and both Kansas Cities. For over 60% of both Massachusetts and New York, the tobacco sales age is now 21. It is time for Connecticut to lead by example and join this list.

We want to ensure that barriers are in place to deter Connecticut children from having access to any form of tobacco products. This bill will, however, grandfather 18-20-year-old's. By doing

this, revenue will not be impacted over the first two years. In addition, those military members who are 18 years of age upon implementation will still be able to purchase tobacco products. Our ultimate goal, however is to extend the health benefits of this bill to ALL Connecticut citizens, including members of the military. In fact, The Department of Defense and the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force have each set goals to become tobacco-free. Raising the legal age of purchase will help protect those who are protecting us.

I respectfully request your support for this important bill.

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