



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Public Health Committee

March 4, 2019

**Commissioner Raul Pino, M.D., M.P.H.
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House Bill #7200 - An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems, and Vapor Products to Persons under Age Twenty-One

The Department of Public Health (DPH) supports the concept raised in House 7200, which would prohibit the sale of cigarettes, tobacco products, electronic nicotine delivery systems and vapor products to persons under age 21. The Department would like to thank the Public Health Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony.

While the Department supports this concept, the language as drafted would be problematic to implement by our sister state agencies. The Department respectfully requests that the Committee review the language provided in sections 47 through 53 of [Senate Bill 877](#) – An Act Concerning Revenue Items to Implement the Governor’s Budget – as a consideration for JFS, which provides a foundation completing the same goal of reducing access to tobacco products by younger children.

Increasing the age for the sale of tobacco products to 21 is an evidence-based strategy endorsed by many national organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics; American Heart, Lung, and Cancer Associations; as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as another effort to help reduce youth tobacco use, which has been increasing at an alarming rate.

Nearly nine out of ten smokers start their tobacco use by age 18, 95% before age 21, and 99% start by age 26¹. Many smokers transition to regular, daily use between the ages of 18 and 21 years². The Institute of Medicine (IOM) reports that “raising the tobacco sale age will significantly reduce the number of adolescents and young adults who start smoking; reduce smoking-caused deaths; and immediately improve the health of adolescents, young adults and young mothers who would be deterred from smoking as well as their children”³.

An earlier age of initiation is associated with greater levels of nicotine dependence and a greater intensity and persistence to continue to use tobacco into adulthood⁴; adolescent brains are particularly vulnerable to nicotine and nicotine addiction⁵. Delaying the age of first experimentation and initiation can reduce the risk that an adolescent transitions towards

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becoming a regular or daily tobacco user, and increases their chance of successfully quitting if they do become a regular user. Due to nicotine addiction, three out of four adolescent smokers continue to use into adulthood, even though they had planned on quitting a few years after starting to smoke⁶.

Young adult smokers (ages 18 to 21) serve as a social source of tobacco products for youth; a legal purchase age of 21 will lessen the likelihood of adolescents receiving tobacco products from friends who can purchase them legally and can help keep tobacco out of Connecticut schools⁷. School districts across the state have reported disruptions in educational instruction due to the rise in teen vaping and have reported a six-fold increase in disciplinary cases during the past two school years.⁸

As tobacco-related healthcare expenditures are over two billion dollars each year in Connecticut⁹, savings from a reduction in tobacco addictions far outweigh the cost of any potential lost sales revenue.

The Department supports the proposed expanded definition of tobacco products in order to cover new products that are under development and will be introduced into the market in the upcoming years, such as heated tobacco. In addition, ensuring that the definition includes products whether they are labeled as containing nicotine or not is beneficial, as there are a plethora of products that are improperly labeled as determined through testing, and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) oversight will not be in effect until 2022.

Increasing the minimum age for the purchase of all tobacco products to the age of 21 will help to postpone tobacco use initiation and promotes the public health.

Thank you for your consideration of this information.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Preventing Tobacco Use among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA, 2012.

² Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, *Increasing the Minimum Legal Sale Age for Tobacco Products to 21*. Washington, D.C., 2015

³ Institute of Medicine, *Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products*. The National Academies Press, Washington, DC, 2015. Available at: http://nationalacademies.org/hmd/~media/files/report%20files/2015/tobacominage/tobacco_minimum_age_report_brief.pdf?_ga=2.102118721.133603273.1550245942-235658467.1550245942

⁴Institute of Medicine, *Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products*, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2015. Accessible via http://nationalacademies.org/hmd/~media/files/report%20files/2015/tobacominage/tobacco_minimum_age_report_brief.pdf?_ga=2.102118721.133603273.1550245942-235658467.1550245942

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⁵Yuan, etal, The Journal of Physiology: Neuroscience, *Nicotine and the Adolescent Brain*, 2015. Accessible via <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1113/JP270492/epdf>.

⁶ U.S. Health and Human Services, *Preventing Tobacco Use among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General*, 2012.

⁷ Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, *Increasing the Minimum Legal Sale Age for Tobacco Products to 21*. Washington, D.C., 2018

⁸ Connecticut State Department of Education, Report on School Discipline in Connecticut Public Schools, February 2019, accessible via https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Board/BoardMaterials020619/Report_on_School_Discipline.pdf?la=en

⁹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Morbidity, and Economic Costs (SAMMEC) System. *Smoking-Attributable Expenditures for Connecticut (SAE) 2009*. Accessible via cdc.gov/oshdata.

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