

American Academy of Pediatrics

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NYSAAP A Coalition of Chapters 1, 2 & 3

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Memo of Support A.00558/S.02833

Prohibits Sale of Tobacco Products to Anyone Under Age 21

Today's most alarming tobacco use trend is the use of e-cigarettes by youth in New York. Recent data shows e-cigarette use by high school students jumped 160% from 2014 to 2018. Over 27% of New York high school students now use e-cigarettes. We are seeing an entire generation of our kids becoming addicted to new tobacco products and being exposed to nicotine, ultrafine particles, heavy metals and volatile organic compounds in e-cigarettes.

The spike in the use of e-cigarettes is particularly troubling given the December 2016 Report of the US Surgeon General found the use of tobacco products containing nicotine in any form among youth, including in e-cigarettes, is unsafe. The report also noted nicotine exposure during adolescence can cause addiction and can harm the developing adolescent brain.

Given 95 percent of adult smokers start smoking before the age of 21, increasing the age for the sale of tobacco products is a smart step to help reduce addiction to tobacco products. There is a growing body of evidence that Tobacco 21 could significantly reduce smoking rates.

Additionally, there are drastic disparities in smoking rates in New York. It is increasingly evident that smoking is an equity issue. In every corner of New York, you can find populations with higher smoking rates including those with low-income, low-education, those reporting poor mental health, and the LGBTQ community. This striking inequity is as prevalent in the youth population as in the general population. Prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to those 21 and over will limit access to tobacco for all teens. For disadvantaged teens reducing the potential of engagement and addiction to nicotine and will help reduce the percent of adult smokers who are at highest risk of long term addiction.

We urge you to pass Tobacco 21 and help protect the young people of New York and our future generations. Tobacco has no redeeming value. It only makes people sick and sometimes kills them. Our young people should not have access to tobacco until they are 21 years old.

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