



TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Ken Fletcher, Director of Advocacy

DATE: May 28, 2019

RE: Tobacco 21 Language in HB 166

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the committee, I am Ken Fletcher, Director for Advocacy for the American Lung Association in Ohio and thank you for this opportunity to offer comments on our concerns about the effectiveness of the provisions of HB 166 to raise the age to purchase tobacco products to 21.

The mission of the American Lung Association is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. While we have come a long way over the last few decades in fighting the tobacco epidemic, we still have a lot of work to do as tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Ohio.

About 95% of adults who smoke started by the age of 21¹, and half of adult smokers become regularly, daily smokers by their 18th birthday, and 8 out of 10 adult smokers transition to regularly, daily smokers by the age of 21.² A report from the National Academy of Medicine (formerly known as the Institute of Medicine (IOM)) found that raising the minimum age for legal purchase to at least 21 years old will significantly reduce smoking rates and save thousands of lives.

This policy is popular and gaining interest and support throughout the country. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study found that 75 percent of adults, including 7 out of 10 adult smokers, are in favor of increase the retail sale age of tobacco products to 21.³

The need for Ohio to take action to protect youth from tobacco is more urgent than ever, with youth e-cigarette use reaching epidemic levels due to a 78 percent increase in high school e-cigarette use from 2017 to 2018, according to results from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s 2018 National Youth Tobacco Survey.

While the American Lung Association applauds Governor DeWine's proposal to raise the minimum age to purchase tobacco products in Ohio, the proposal must include certain provisions to ensure that the law is effectively enforced and include e-cigarettes. The provisions that the Lung Association supports include:

- Coverage of all tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes.
- Provision for public education, training, and technical assistance to retailers.
- Implementation measures for active enforcement, such as retailer licensing and penalties, including license suspension and revocation.
- No creation of new categories of products, which could exempt them from other tobacco control laws.

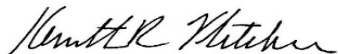
- No penalization of youth.
- No preemption of other jurisdictions from passing strong tobacco control laws

Without the amendments outlined above, the American Lung Association cannot support HB 166.

We urge lawmakers to pass a meaningful Tobacco 21 law that will effectively reduce youth consumption of all tobacco products. The American Lung Association looks forward to working with the legislature on amendments needed to improve this bill to make it an effective Tobacco 21 law to protect our young people from a lifelong addiction to all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,



Kenneth Fletcher,
Director of Advocacy
Ken.fletcher@lung.org
248-220-5213

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Survey on Drug Use, 2014. Analysis by the American Lung Association Epidemiology and Statistics Unit Using SPSS Software.

² 4 United States Department of Health and Human Services. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2014. ICPSR36361-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2016-03-22. <http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR36361.v1>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2015/p0707-tobacco-age.html>

