



Dear Akron City Council Members,

We are writing to express our support for Tobacco 21 legislation that would make it unlawful to sell or distribute a tobacco product to anyone under the age of 21 in Akron. Tobacco 21 legislation may reduce the number of young people who use and become addicted to tobacco products and, ultimately, help to reduce the disease and premature death that these products cause.

Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of death in Ohio and the United States and are responsible for over \$5.6 billion in health care costs in Ohio each year. Tobacco use almost always begins during adolescence and young adulthood. About 95 percent of adult smokers began smoking before they turned 21. If current trends continue, 259,000 of Ohio's youth alive today will die prematurely from a smoking-related illness.

Increasing the age for sale of tobacco products to 21 will help counter the tobacco industry's efforts to target young people at a critical time when many move from experimenting with tobacco to regular smoking. In Ohio alone, the tobacco industry spends over \$1 million a day marketing its products. It will also help keep tobacco out of high schools, where younger teens often obtain tobacco products from older students.

In March of 2015, the Institute of Medicine predictive models concluded that increasing the tobacco sale age would 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. The greatest impact would be among adolescents age 15 to 17, who would no longer be able to pass for legal age and would have a harder time obtaining cigarettes from their older friends and classmates.

Laws that increase the tobacco sales age to 21 must include certain components to ensure that they will be effective, enforced and include the products that children are using the most. These components 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 would exempt them from other tobacco control laws.
- No penalization of youth.
- No preemption of other jurisdictions from passing strong tobacco control laws

Increasing the tobacco sale age to 21 also has broad public support. A survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), released in July 2015, found that 75 percent of adults support increasing the minimum age for sale of tobacco products to 21.

We call on you to support legislation that may reduce the number of young people who start on a path that too often leads to addiction, disease, and premature death.

Sincerely,

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network  
American Lung Association in Ohio

American Heart Association  
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids