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**Testimony Re:** S-2464, Raises the legal minimum age to purchase tobacco products and nicotine-delivery systems from 18 to 21 years of age

**Senate Committee on Judiciary**

**May 1, 2018**

**Devan Quinn, Policy Analyst**

Madam Chairwoman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today to offer Rhode Island KIDS COUNT's support for Senate Bill 2464 which would raise the tobacco sale age from 18 to 21 years of age.

### **Raising the Tobacco Age to 21**

- The Institute of Medicine convened a committee that concluded that raising the minimum legal sale age (MLA) for tobacco products to 21 may prevent or delay initiation of tobacco use by adolescents.<sup>1,2</sup>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that 75% of adults favor making 21 the minimum age of sale for tobacco products.<sup>3</sup>
- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends increasing the minimum legal sale age to 21.<sup>4</sup>
- The AAP reports that a majority of smokers (90%) start smoking before age 18. Young smokers frequently obtain cigarettes from older friends who can legally purchase them.<sup>5</sup>
- The AAP considers effective "Tobacco 21" laws to include all types of tobacco products including cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, electronic nicotine delivery systems (including e-cigarettes) and hookah; and does not penalize underage users for possession of tobacco products, but rather holds retailers responsible for not selling to underage people.<sup>6</sup>

### **National movement toward increasing the sale age**

- Nationally, as of January 2018, five states (CA, HI, ME, NJ, OR) and the District of Columbia have set the sale age to 21.<sup>7</sup>

### **Health Consequences of Smoking**

- Tobacco use is a major public health problem that affects many children, youth, and families. Tobacco use has caused over 20 million deaths in the U.S. since the 1960s, including 2.5 million deaths from secondhand exposure.<sup>8</sup> Smoking can reduce life expectancy by at least a decade and remains the leading cause of preventable death and disability.<sup>9,10</sup> In Rhode Island, 1,800 adults die each year from adverse health effects from smoking and an estimated \$640 million dollars is spent annually on smoking related medical expenditures.<sup>11</sup>

### **Closing**

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT respectfully urges the Senate to pass S-2464 to raise the tobacco sale age from 18 to 21 years of age. We thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your continued leadership on children's health.

## **References**

<sup>1</sup> *Public health implications of raising the minimum age of legal access to tobacco products.* (2015). Washington, D.C: Institute of Medicine of the National Academies.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). *Three out of four American adults favor making 21 the minimum age of sale for tobacco products.* Retrieved January 22, 2018, from [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

<sup>3,4,5,6</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics. (n.d.). *Tobacco to 21: An easy way to save young lives.* Retrieved January 22, 2018, from [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

<sup>7</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. (n.d.). *States and localities that have raised the minimum legal sale age for tobacco products to 21.* Retrieved August 1, 2017, from [www.tobaccofreekids.org](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org)

<sup>8</sup> The health consequences of smoking-50 years of progress: A report of the Surgeon General: Executive Summary. (2014). Rockville, MD; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Office of the Surgeon General.

<sup>9</sup> Centers for Disease Control. (2017). Fast facts. Retrieved August 1, 2017, from [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

<sup>10</sup> Centers for Disease Control. (2017). Tobacco use. Retrieved August 1, 2017, from [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

<sup>11</sup> Broken Promises to our children: A state-by-state look at the 1998 tobacco settlement 18 years later. (2016). Washington, DC: Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.