



TO: Wisconsin Senators and Representatives

DATE: August 7, 2019

RE: Tobacco 21 Policy

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. We can and must do better to restrict youth access to these deadly and addictive products. We applaud Senator Marklein and Representative Spiros for authoring a Tobacco 21 policy in Wisconsin. While there are some components of the proposal we would like to see strengthened, we support the bill and see it as a definite step in the right direction. We look forward to working with the legislature on this issue.

If done right, raising the sales age for tobacco products, including e-cigarettes will help eliminate tobacco use and addiction. Nearly 95 percent of adult smokers start smoking before age 21, and most 15- to 17-year-olds get their tobacco from friends who have turned 18. Raising the sales age to 21 will help remove tobacco from high schools altogether.

Additionally, adolescents' brains are still developing. Studies have shown nicotine can harm brain development and have adverse impacts on learning, memory and attention. Nicotine exposure during adolescence can also cause addiction and increase risk for future addiction to other drugs.

Raising the sales age to 21 has overwhelming public support and has passed in 18 states and over 450 communities nationwide. It's time for Wisconsin to take a step forward and raise the age to 21.

These products— whether it be cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, or e-cigarettes— are not safe, and do not belong in the hands of our youth. We thank Senator Marklein and Representative Spiros for authoring this bill and beginning the conversation. It is a good bill and a definite step in the right direction. We look forward to working with the authors and the entire legislature as the bill makes its way through the legislative process.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Nicole Hudzinski, Government Relations Director, American Heart Association, at 608-225-4042 or nicole.hudzinski@heart.org.