



Georgia Society For Public Health Education (GASOPHE)

Raising the Minimum Legal Sales Age of Tobacco and Nicotine Delivery Products to 21 Years of Age

WHEREAS, tobacco use is the foremost preventable cause of premature death in the United States¹ and in Georgia, responsible for approximately 480,000 deaths nationally and 11,700 statewide a year,^{2,3} with 20 million premature deaths attributed to smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke in the U.S. over the past 50 years since the first Surgeon General's report on smoking in 1964;⁴

WHEREAS, the annual economic impact of smoking in Georgia is more than \$7 billion in health care and lost worker productivity costs;³

WHEREAS, national data show that 95 percent of adult smokers begin smoking before they turn 21, and that the ages of 18 to 21 are a critical period when many smokers move from experimental smoking to regular, daily use;⁵

WHEREAS, the developing brains of young people are particularly susceptible to the addictive properties of nicotine,⁶ and tobacco industry documents show that those who start smoking by the age of 18 are almost twice as likely to become lifetime smokers as those who start after they turn 21;⁷

WHEREAS, electronic smoking device use among minors has recently tripled and continues to grow in popularity surpassing current use in every other tobacco product including cigarettes;⁸

WHEREAS, in 2013 4% (14,000) of middle school students and 13% (53,000) of high school students smoked cigarettes;^{9, 10}

WHEREAS, in 2013 4% (15,200) of middle school students and 8.6% (39,300) of high school students in Georgia currently smoke e-cigarettes defined as having smoked e-cigarettes during the past 30 days;¹¹

WHEREAS, in 2013 9% of middle school students and 22% of high school students in Georgia currently use tobacco (cigarettes, smokeless tobacco or cigars);^{9, 10}

WHEREAS, a 2015 Institute of Medicine report concluded that raising the minimum legal sales age for tobacco products nationwide would reduce tobacco initiation, particularly among adolescents aged 15 to 17, and that it would improve health across the lifespan and save lives;

and that raising the minimum legal sales age for tobacco products to 21 nationwide would, over time, lead to a 12 percent decrease in smoking prevalence;¹³

WHEREAS, the Institute of Medicine also predicted that raising the minimum legal sales age for tobacco products to 21 nationwide would result in 223,000 fewer premature deaths, 50,000 fewer deaths from lung cancer, and 4.2 million fewer years of life lost for those born between 2000 and 2019, and that it would result in near immediate reductions in preterm birth, low birth weight, and sudden infant death syndrome;¹³

WHEREAS, a growing number of communities and states have enacted laws mandating a minimum legal sales age for tobacco products to 21,¹⁴

WHEREAS, three-quarters of U.S. adults favor raising the minimum age of sale for tobacco products to 21, including seven in ten smokers;¹⁵

WHEREAS, 64% of U.S. middle and high school students favor raising the minimum age of sale for tobacco products to 21;¹⁶

WHEREAS, the retail impact of ordinances mandating a minimum legal sales age of 21 for tobacco products is minimal, with an estimated decrease of only 2% of total tobacco sales;¹⁷

WHEREAS, raising the minimum legal sales age for tobacco products is similar to raising the legal drinking age to 21, which resulted in decreased alcohol use and dependence among youth, and is attributed to a decline in drunk driving fatalities;¹⁸

WHEREAS, the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) supports Tobacco 21 efforts, GASOPHE a local chapter is following to support efforts in the state of Georgia.

THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED: that GASOPHE in partnership with the SOPHE will advocate and support comprehensive tobacco laws in the state of Georgia as outlined by the Tobacco Control Network's 2016 Policy Recommendations Guide¹⁹ to raise the minimum legal sales age for tobacco and nicotine delivery products to 21.

RESOLVED that GASOPHE in partnership with SOPHE will increase professional and public education at the state and local level on the benefits and importance of raising the minimum legal sales age for tobacco and nicotine delivery products to 21;

RESOLVED that GASOPHE in partnership with SOPHE encourages participation in community coalitions to advocate for raising the minimum legal sales, purchase, and use age for tobacco and nicotine delivery products to be consistent with the alcohol policy in their respective communities.

RESOLVED that GASOPHE hereby supports efforts by the state of Georgia and local governments to raise the minimum legal sales age for tobacco and nicotine delivery products to 21.

ADOPTED by the Georgia Society for Public Health Education this DATE.

References

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