

## Letter: Raising age to buy tobacco pays off

- LETTER
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*A recent study by the Institute of Medicine looks at the public health implications of raising the minimum legal age to purchase tobacco products. Experts at the IOM concluded that increasing the minimum legal access age from 18 to 21 will have a positive impact on reducing youth initiation of tobacco use, particularly in adolescents aged 15 to 17. If the minimum legal age was raised to 21 now, by the time today's teenagers are adults, we would see a 12 percent decrease in smoking rates.*

*Many municipalities in Bristol County have worked tirelessly to adopt a variety of policies — like eliminating the sale of single cheap cigars, limiting the number of new tobacco sellers and removing flavored tobacco from stores that minors frequent — that, when taken together, can have real impact on youth tobacco use. It's encouraging to have another evidence-based strategy to employ.*

*Most of the policies cities and towns use to prevent youth tobacco use are aimed at reducing the tobacco industry's influence. Without local regulation, the tobacco companies target young people with products that are cheap, sweet and easy to get. While raising the minimum sales age to 21 helps reduce youth access, it alone does not eliminate the sales to minors or impact other access channels. For this reason, the strategy of raising the minimum sale age to 21 is just one of several key strategies to be used by municipalities to reduce youth smoking.*

*The goal of Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program is to de-normalize youth tobacco use. We know how to achieve a tobacco-free generation and, with coordinated actions and investments, we can get there.*

*Kathleen Wilbur*

*Program Director, Southeast Tobacco Free Community Partnership, Seven Hills Behavioral Health*

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