

# PRESS RELEASE

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July 19, 2018

## Massachusetts Poised to Become Sixth State to Raise Tobacco Age to 21

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### **Statement of Matthew L. Myers, President, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids**

*July 19, 2018*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – With final passage by the Legislature today, Massachusetts is poised to become the sixth state to prohibit the sale of tobacco products to anyone under 21. With this bold and historic move, Massachusetts will prevent young people from starting to use tobacco, save lives and help make the next generation tobacco-free. Gov. Charlie Baker has indicated support for raising the tobacco age to 21, and we look forward to him signing this legislation into law.

In addition to raising the tobacco age to 21, the Massachusetts legislation includes other important steps to protect public health by prohibiting pharmacies from selling tobacco products and adding e-cigarettes to the state's smoke-free law. Massachusetts will be the first state to enact a statewide prohibition on tobacco sales in pharmacies. We thank Rep. Paul McMurtry and Sen. Jason Lewis for their leadership in sponsoring the bills.

Massachusetts's action provides valuable momentum for the growing, nationwide movement to increase the tobacco age to 21. Tobacco 21 laws have been enacted by California, Hawaii, New Jersey, Maine, Oregon, Washington D.C. and at least 340 cities and counties, including New York City, Chicago, San Antonio, Boston, Cleveland, Minneapolis, St. Louis and both Kansas Cities. The Illinois legislature has sent a bill to the governor for his signature.

Increasing the tobacco age to 21 will reduce tobacco use among youth and young adults – age groups when nearly all tobacco use begins and that are heavily targeted by the tobacco industry. We know that about 95 percent of adult smokers began smoking before they turned 21. We also know that tobacco companies spend \$9.5 billion a year – more than \$1 million every hour – to market their deadly and addictive products, much of it aimed at young people.

Increasing the tobacco age to 21 will help counter the industry's relentless efforts to target young people at a critical time when many move from experimenting with tobacco to regular smoking. It will also help keep tobacco out of high schools, where younger teens often obtain tobacco products from older students. A 2015 report by the National Academy of Medicine concluded that increasing the tobacco sale age to 21 would yield substantial public health benefits, with immediate and long-term benefits for the nation's health.

Tobacco use – the leading preventable cause of death – kills over 480,000 Americans and costs the nation about \$170 billion in health care bills each year. In Massachusetts, tobacco kills over 9,300 people and costs over \$4 billion in health care expenses each year. Without

additional action to reduce tobacco use, over 100,000 kids alive today in Massachusetts will die prematurely from smoking. Increasing the tobacco age to 21 is a critical step in reducing and eventually eliminating tobacco's terrible toll.