



Testimony: in favor of raising the minimum legal sales age to 21
February 2nd 2016

To the Honorable Laurie Monnes Anderson
Chair, Committee on Health Care
Oregon State Senate
Salem, Oregon

Chair Monnes Anderson and Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today on behalf the organization Tobacco 21.

With 24% of Oregon 11th graders¹ currently using tobacco, we are pleased with the attention this issue has received. We believe that tobacco retail licensure is a strong method of holding retailers accountable for adherence to tobacco sales regulations. However, our organization is firmly against the preemptions listed in the current draft of the bill. Because the tobacco industry is evermore creative in finding more ways to get tobacco into the hands of children, we believe it is essential that local government have the flexibility to react, which would be compromised in the current draft of the bill.

That said, my organization's main objection is that the bill places the age of sale for tobacco at 18. An analysis published last year looking at the effect of compliance with age 18 laws and youth smoking found only a small relationship between the level of compliance with age 18 and their effect on teenage smoking behavior. A major reason for this is that no matter how strictly an age of 18 is enforced, there is still a legal supply of tobacco in high schools: the senior class.²

In fact, research done right here in Oregon shows that stricter enforcement of tobacco age regulations at age 18 leads to increased use of social sources of tobacco.³Based on research like this, the institute of Medicine considers social sources of tobacco as one of the primary sources of tobacco to underage smokers.

As such, we, along 22 other organizations, recommend that the minimum legal sales age of tobacco in Oregon be raised to 21. 95% of smokers start before the age of 21,

¹ OregonHealthTeens2020

https://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/Surveys/OregonHealthyTeens/Documents/2015/2015_OHT_State_Report.pdf

² Spivak A, Monnat S, Prohibiting juvenile access to tobacco: Violation rates, cigarette sales, and youth smoking. 2015, International Journal of Drug Policy.

³ Institute of Medicine, Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2015<http://iom.nationalacademies.org/Reports/2015/TobaccoMinimumAgeReport>

TOBACCO ~~eighteen~~ twenty-one

and the Institute of Medicine predicts that age 21 for tobacco would reduce smoking initiation among 15-17 year olds by 25%.⁴

There are now more than 110 municipalities in America with age 21 for tobacco including New York, Boston, and Berkeley, as well as the whole state of Hawaii. In fact, all military branches in Hawaii announced on January 1st that they would voluntarily follow the law on military bases, requiring soldiers to be 21 to buy tobacco in Hawaii. In framing that decision Rear Admiral John Fuller, commander of the US Navy's Hawaii region said "if someone is young enough to fight for their country, they should be free from addiction to a deadly drug."

Thank you for allowing me to speak today, and I can answer any questions you might have at this time.

Henry K. Philofsky
Western Region Director
Tobacco 21

⁴ Ibid