

Chair Monnes-Anderson and members of the committee,

My name is Emma Monson, I am a senior at Westview High School, and a providence Rebel. I am here today to encourage you to vote yes on raising the age of sale on all tobacco products to 21.

Two weeks ago, as I sat in the bleachers cheering on my school's basketball team, I overheard a conversation between a freshman and one of my senior classmates. They were discussing arrangements for the 18 year old to buy the freshman cigarettes. I sat there, stunned, disgusted, and angry. Later that same week I was in my local convenience store buying a pack of gum when I saw another senior classmate of mine purchasing cigarettes. He must have seen my look of disbelief as he reposed "what I'm 18." These are only a few examples of situations I am sure occur numerous times daily. This is evidenced by the littering of cigarette butts on my walk to school and in the school parking lots.

Although 18 is the age of a legal adult, I can tell you from personal experience I am still learning how to make important decisions. Most of my peers struggle to see the long term consequences of their choices. Most are subject, and easily succumb, to peer pressure. The choice to purchase and smoke cigarettes is an agreement to a life bound by illness and addiction, this is why I chose to join the providence rebels to education my classmates on these long term impacts, because I do not believe

To ask such an influential decision of anyone under 18 is unfair. The right to a healthy and prosperous life is not being protected by allowing this substance in high schools. As nearly 95% of smokers begin by the age of 21, millions of dollars and lives could be saved by simply eliminating the number of students in high schools who can purchase tobacco, thereby stopping the distribution to younger students. The prevention of such easy access could stop the formation of this costly habit for many.

I am here to defend the rights of my little brothers, who cannot do so themselves but are subject to the detrimental influence of tobacco daily. I ask you to take a stand and protect a very vulnerable population of people who often times do not have a voice of their own. If you are given the opportunity, I urge you to support raising the age of tobacco to 21.

Thank you,

Emma Monson