



TO: Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair
Senator Jeff Kruse, Vice Chair
Senate Health Care Committee

FROM: Deborah Rumsey, Executive Director, Children's Health Alliance
Jay Rosenbloom, Medical Director, Children's Health Alliance

SUBJECT: Oregon Pediatricians support Tobacco 21 [SB 754]

Children's Health Alliance (CHA) is an association of over 100 primary care pediatricians and nurse practitioners across five counties in the Portland/Vancouver and Salem Metropolitan areas. We provide care for approximately 140,000 children in Oregon. The Alliance was established in 1998 to promote a culture of quality improvement among member practices with the mission to improve care for all children.

CHA supports "Tobacco 21" [SB 754], which will raise the minimum legal age to purchase tobacco products to age 21.

Tobacco use and second-hand tobacco exposure are significant threats to the health of our patients and have immense human and financial costs. In 2014, nearly 140,000 Oregonians had a serious tobacco-related illness and more than 7,000 Oregonians died of tobacco-related causes. We spent \$1.4 billion on medical care for tobacco-related disease and suffered \$1.1 billion in lost productivity due to tobacco.¹

Every day in our pediatric practices, we see the consequences of tobacco use. Each of us cares for children with asthma that is caused by, or made worse by, tobacco exposure. We all have adolescent patients who use cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, or e-cigarettes. Among Oregon's 11th graders, 1 in 10 use cigarettes and nearly 1 in 5 use other tobacco products.² Most of these 11th graders are getting their tobacco

¹ Oregon Tobacco Fact Sheet, 2014.

<https://public.health.oregon.gov/PreventionWellness/TobaccoPrevention/Documents/countyfacts/OHA-Oregon-TobaccoFactSheet.pdf>

² Ibid.



from peers who are 18 or older and can purchase tobacco legally. Nine out of 10 adults who smoke were like these 11th graders - they started before they were 18.

Raising the tobacco purchase age to 21 would lead to substantial reductions in youth and adult tobacco use, improve the health of Oregon's children and teenagers, and save millions of dollars in health care costs and lost productivity. This strategy is also supported by a majority of Americans: 3 out of 4 Americans, including 70 percent of current smokers, support raising the minimum tobacco purchase age to 21.³

For the health of our patients – Oregon's children and youth – we support the passage of the Tobacco 21 bill, [SB 754].

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2015/p0707-tobacco-age.html>