



ILLINOIS ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS

Devoted to Advocacy, Education & Action

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July 5, 2017

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Berwyn City Council

Via email: MPaul@ci.berwyn.il.us

Dear Honorable Members of the City Council for the City of Berwyn,

Illinois family physicians ask that the Berwyn City Council vote yes on July 11 to make 21 the legal age to purchase all tobacco products. Known as Tobacco 21, this strategy will save lives and reduce healthcare costs associated with tobacco use. The Illinois Academy of Family Physicians strongly supports this tobacco prevention strategy.

In March of 2015, the Institute of Medicine released the results of a study that estimated that raising the tobacco purchasing age to 21 would reduce smoking among 15 – 17 year-olds by 25 percent, and 18 – 20 year-olds by 15 percent. Many thousands of kids will live longer, healthier lives because they will never become addicted to nicotine.

During the years from ages 18-21, youthful experimentation often accelerates into daily use. It's a time when the adolescent brain is highly vulnerable to the effects of a powerful addictive agent like nicotine. Exposure during this period may result in permanent neurological receptor changes that lead to a lifetime nicotine habit and resulting illness.

We urge Berwyn to also include the purchasing of e-cigarettes in the ordinance. The long-term health effects of these products are currently unknown. What we do know is that e-cigarettes have nicotine, harmful chemicals and toxins known to cause cancer and other ailments. Meanwhile e-cigarette use among youth has tripled in just the past few years.

Some people suggest military personnel should be considered, and that if someone is "old enough to fight for their country," they should be old enough to buy cigarettes. Because our soldiers need to be in top physical shape to do their jobs, the U.S. Department of Defense has already committed to making all military bases and posts worldwide tobacco-free by the year 2020. The U.S. military also supports tobacco 21 laws. There is nothing patriotic about tobacco use or selling these products to 18-20-year-olds.

The costs of treating smoking-related illnesses are astronomical. Illinois currently spends \$5.49 billion, \$2 billion of that from the state's Medicaid program, to treat tobacco related diseases.

The enormously powerful tobacco industry lobby has derailed initiatives in Congress and our state legislature. But, where federal and state governance fails, local leadership has succeeded. Virtually all statewide workplace and public smoking bans began with local government regulations.

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Support for raising the purchasing age to 21 is spreading nationwide. More than 235 cities nationwide including Boston, Kansas City, New York City and Cleveland have tobacco 21 laws. Chicago became a Tobacco 21 city in 2016. Other Illinois Tobacco 21 cities are Evanston, Oak Park, Highland Park and Naperville. There is legislation filed to make Illinois a Tobacco 21 state, like Hawaii and California. Berwyn can help continue momentum to a statewide Tobacco 21 law.

The tobacco industry has not given up on hooking our kids to be their future customers. We cannot give up the fight to keep tobacco away from our young people. Let us help today's youth make the transition to tobacco-free adults and enjoy a healthier future. The Illinois Tobacco Quitline at 866-QUIT-YES is ready to help all young smokers quit, and so are the family physicians of Illinois.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald R. Lurye". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "L".

Donald R. Lurye, MD, MMM, CPE, FAAFP
President