

Statement in Support of HB 3208 – Tobacco 21

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Family physicians across Illinois strongly support House Bill 3208 and Senate Resolution 318. Raising the purchase age to 21 will reduce tobacco use and addiction, especially among young people.

As a family physician, I care for many teenagers and young adults. They are still developing physically, and emotionally, and their brains are still developing as well. It's a crucial period where choices are made and habits are formed. If we can guide them through these late teens and into their 20s without a nicotine addiction, it's more likely they will never become tobacco users.

I'm also a father of two children, ages 8 and 5. I absolutely want to ensure that they grow up to be tobacco-free adults. Taking away the temptation of tobacco by removing the ability to purchase it can make the difference when these young adults are faced with choices, without parental guidance.

A 2015 Institute of Medicine report predicts that raising the minimum age for the sale of tobacco products to 21 will, over time, reduce the smoking rate by about 12 percent and smoking-related deaths by 10 percent.

The study further estimates that Tobacco 21 laws would reduce smoking among 15-17 year olds by 25 percent and among 18-20 year olds by 15 percent. That's a lot of kids we can impact at no cost to the state!

While we celebrate 10 years of smoke-free Illinois and clean indoor air, let's think about today's 10-year-old children. I want them to grow up without the cloud of smoke that we grew up with.

Illinois college campuses are already smoke free. Let's send our students to college without the easy access to tobacco products that only cause them harm and can't be used on campus.

Illinois has made progress in cutting youth smoking rates. By taking this next step, we can help today's kids transition to tobacco-free adults. They'll suffer fewer illnesses, reduce their risk of deadly diseases and enjoy a healthier future. Physicians, nurses, counselors and all providers are ready to help all our young patients quit tobacco for good! Family physicians support tobacco 21 and ask all our legislators to vote yes.

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The Illinois Academy of Family Physicians represents over 4,900 family physicians, family medicine residents and medical students in Illinois. www.iafp.com.