



May 29, 2019

The Honorable Brian Schatz  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Young  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Diana DeGette  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chris Stewart  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Schatz and Young and Representatives DeGette and Stewart:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents 134,600 family physicians and medical students across the country, I write to share the organization's support for the *Tobacco to 21 Act* (S. 1258/HR 2411). This important legislation would raise the minimum legal age for purchasing or using tobacco products from 18 to 21 years.

The *Tobacco to 21 Act* is consistent with the AAFP's long standing efforts to promote a tobacco-free society. In 1988, the AAFP began its [Tar Wars](#) community-based program to educate fourth- and fifth-grade students about the dangers of tobacco usage. The health and economic impacts are unambiguous. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 16 million people live with a smoking-related disease and the U.S. spends \$170 billion in annual health care costs associated with smoking. Each year smoking [causes](#) 480,000 deaths – higher than from human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle accidents, and firearm-related incidents combined.

Understanding the risks associated with tobacco use, it is imperative we reduce young tobacco usage. Most adult tobacco use begins in adolescence, and often leads to addiction. The CDC reports that about 2,000 young people under age 18 smoke their first cigarette each day, and 1.5 million [more](#) young people used electronic cigarettes in 2018 than in the previous year.

Therefore, as family physicians, dedicated to health and well-being, we are pleased to support the *Tobacco to 21 Act*. For more information, please contact Sonya Clay, Government Relations Representative, at 202-232-9033 or [sclay@aafp.org](mailto:sclay@aafp.org).

Sincerely,

Michael L. Munger, MD, FAAFP  
Board Chair

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