



May 21, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tim Kaine
U.S. Senator
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators McConnell and Kaine:

Our organizations write to you today to express our support for your Tobacco-Free Youth Act. As introduced, this legislation will work to protect youth from tobacco products by raising the national age of sale to 21.

Our organizations are pleased with the growing support for enacting a strong, bipartisan bill that would raise the federal age of sale for tobacco products to 21. We recognize this as one, among several, important federal policy changes needed to address the public health crisis of tobacco use in the United States, including prohibiting the manufacture and sale of all flavored tobacco products; restricting online sale of all tobacco products, particularly to underage purchasers; and increasing funding of the prevention and cessation activities of the CDC Office on Smoking and Health.

We recognize that the need for increasing the age of sale to 21 and these other policies are urgently needed. As the legislation moves forward, we would request that your legislation require FDA to finalize a rule within 180 days after the date of enactment. We also look forward to working with you on the implementation of the Synar provisions to ensure that states can make the transition to 21 without losing important federal funding.

It is also important to us that your bill remain strongly protective of the public health throughout the legislative process. Our organizations are concerned about likely efforts by the tobacco industry to weaken the legislation as it moves forward. Such efforts could include abandoning the federal age 21 provision and leaving only the Synar amendment provisions; changing the legislation to preempt state or local adoption of more comprehensive, Tobacco 21 laws that are more rigorously enforced; amending the legislation to exempt categories of the population to whom the age of 21 sale prohibition would apply; exempting one or more tobacco products from the increased age of sale; altering product definitions or other provisions to the benefit of tobacco manufacturers or retailers; or, offsetting any cost using other public health programs or funding of those programs.

Your bill makes a very valuable contribution to the efforts to protect the public health through the introduction of your bipartisan bill and your commitment to moving the bill to enactment, and we look forward to working with you as well as Senators Schatz, Young, Romney, and Durbin and other interested Senators on the shared goal to pass a strong bill establishing a federal age of 21 for the sale of all tobacco products.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Cancer Research
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Cardiology
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
Trust for America's Health