



June 25, 2018

The Honorable Bruce Rauner
Governor, State of Illinois
State Capitol Room 207
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Rauner:

On behalf of the physician members of the Illinois State Medical Society (ISMS), I strongly urge you to sign Senate Bill 2332 into law.

Senate Bill 2332 would raise the age to legally buy tobacco to twenty-one across the state. Twenty-four municipalities, including Chicago, Aurora, Evanston and Peoria, have already adopted the higher age requirement, and Lake County has implemented it countywide. This policy would greatly reduce the rate of smoking among Illinoisans, as ninety-five percent of smokers begin smoking before the age of twenty-one. Increasing the minimum age to twenty-one would also reduce distribution to high school students, since a large majority of those who purchase cigarettes for distribution are between the ages of eighteen and twenty, and twenty-one year olds are rarely still in high school.

As physicians, we know that while eighteen year olds may seemingly be physiologically mature, the parts of the brain most responsible for decision making, impulse control, sensation seeking, and susceptibility to peer pressure are still developing throughout young adulthood. The vulnerability of adolescent brains to the effects of nicotine and nicotine addiction explain why so many regular smokers begin experimenting with smoking between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one.

Physicians also know how dangerous smoking is to our patients' health. In fact, tobacco use costs the State of Illinois \$5.49 billion in health care costs and \$5.27 billion in lost productivity every year. ¹ If, as the Institute of Medicine projects, increasing the minimum age for tobacco sales to twenty-one will reduce overall smoking by 12 percent by the time

¹ Campaign for Tobacco-free Kids. (2017). The Toll of Tobacco in Illinois. Available at http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/toll_us/illinois

today's teenagers become adults, the savings for the state could be massive. ² Nationally, some economists predict that raising the age limit could save \$212 billion per year. ³

Finally, a Centers for Disease Control study from 2015 found that seventy-five percent of adults support raising the minimum age to buy tobacco products to twenty-one, including seventy-percent of current smokers. ⁴ Another recent study found that sixty-eight percent of eighteen to twenty four year olds would support raising the age to buy tobacco products, as well. ⁵

As physician leaders committed to improving the health of the citizens of our state, ISMS believes that Senate Bill 2332 would achieve this goal by significantly reducing the number of smokers and by preventing vulnerable young adults from becoming habitual smokers. We therefore respectfully request that you sign Senate Bill 2332 into law.

Sincerely,

Richard C. Anderson, M.D.
Chair, Board of Trustees
Illinois State Medical Society

cc: Katherine M. Tynus, M.D.
Paul E. Pedersen, M.D.
Alexander R. Lerner

² Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. (2015) Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products. Available at www.iom.edu/tobaccominimumage

³ Counter Tobacco. (2015). Raising the Minimum Legal Sale Age to 21 [fact sheet]. Available at www.countertobacco.org/raising-minimum-legal-sale-age-21

⁴ King, B.A., Jama, A.O., Marynak, K.L., Promoff, G.R. (2015). Attitudes toward raising the minimum age of sale for tobacco among U.S. adults. *Am J Prev Med*, 49(4):583-588.

⁵ Morain, S.R., Winickoff, J.P., Mello, M.M. (2016). Have Tobacco 21 Laws Come of Age? *N Engl J Med*, 374: 1601-1604.