



May 22, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate Majority Leader
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Leader McConnell and Senator Kaine:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am writing to express our support for bipartisan legislation that you recently introduced, the Tobacco-Free Youth Act (S.1541), which would raise the nationwide minimum age to buy all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and vaping devices, from 18 to 21. We appreciate your leadership to reduce the rate of youth smoking in this country and to give our children the opportunity to grow into healthy adults.

ACP is the largest medical specialty organization and the second largest physician group in the United States. ACP members include 154,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.

ACP supports this legislation, the Tobacco- Free Youth Act, as it is consistent with our policy that supports raising the legal age to purchase tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes, from 18 to 21. We are pleased that this bill targets a reduction in smoking among our nation's youth, a segment of the population that is especially vulnerable to the dangers of addiction to tobacco. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "tobacco product use is established primarily during adolescence and nearly 9 out of 10 smokers first try cigarette smoking by age 18." The use of electronic nicotine delivery systems are growing in popularity among young people as "nearly 1 out of every 20 middle school students and 1 out of every 5 high school students reported that they used electronic cigarettes in the past 30 days. Current electronic cigarette use among high school students increased by 78 percent from 2017 to 2018."

ACP has long advocated for efforts to reduce tobacco use as it is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. We know that effective tobacco control occurs when a concerted effort is made through the passage of legislation, like S. 1541, as well as other initiatives such as an increase in tobacco excise taxes, prohibiting smoking in public places, facilitating smoking cessation programs, and the banning of tobacco flavorings including menthol. We support the efforts of the Food and Drug Administration to regulate tobacco

products, including prohibiting the sale and illegal marketing of tobacco products to underage people.

While we have made significant progress in reducing the rate of tobacco use in this country over the past 40 years, we must continue our efforts to ensure that a new generation of smokers does not replace those who have quit or died because of their addiction. We applaud your introduction of this legislation as an important step in curbing the use of tobacco among our youth and look forward to working with you to ensure its passage in the 116th Congress. We urge Senators not to weaken this legislation with any amendments that would restrict enforcement mechanisms in this bill or provide any benefit to the tobacco industry.

We urge the Congress to pass this measure without further delay and to not weaken this legislation with any amendments that would restrict enforcement mechanisms in this bill or provide any benefit to the tobacco industry. It is also imperative that any final legislation not restrict states and localities from passing their own age and other restrictions on purchase of tobacco products that may be more restrictive than that established by this legislation.

Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please do not hesitate to contact Brian Buckley on our staff at bbuckley@acponline.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert M. McLean". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name.

Robert M. McLean, MD, FACP
President