

## **Testimony Re: House Bill 7041 Regarding Tobacco and Nicotine Products -- Children**

**House Health, Education, & Welfare Committee  
February 5, 2020  
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today regarding House Bill 7041. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT supports this legislation which raises the minimum age to purchase tobacco products and nicotine-delivery systems from 18 to 21.

### **Rapid Increase in Youth Use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) also known as E-Cigarettes or Vaping**

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT has been tracking youth who report using tobacco and nicotine products for many years. While tremendous progress had been made to decrease youth cigarette use in the previous decade, youth use of electronic cigarettes has recently rapidly increased.

### **On December 18, 2018, the U.S. Surgeon General declared use of e-cigarettes among youth an epidemic.<sup>1</sup>**

- **Declines in Youth Use of Traditional Cigarettes:** The percentage of Rhode Island middle school students who report ever trying cigarettes declined from 16% in 2007 to 5% in 2019. Current cigarette use also declined from 4% to 2% during that time period. Similar declines were reported among Rhode Island high school students. Between 1997 and 2019, reports of ever trying a cigarette declined from 69% to 18% and current cigarette use declined from 35% to 4%.<sup>2</sup>
- **Rising Youth Use of Other Tobacco Product including ENDS or E-Cigarettes:** Electronic vapor products are one of the most popular emerging products being used. In Rhode Island in 2019, 49% of high school students reported ever using an electronic vapor product and 30% reported current use in the past 30 days. Similarly, 16% of Rhode Island middle school students reported ever using an electronic vapor product and 7% reported current use during that time.<sup>3</sup>
- **ENDS (Electronic Cigarettes or products like JUUL) are Harmful to Youth:** Although e-cigarettes pose less risk to an individual than traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes are harmful to youth.<sup>4,5</sup> E-cigarettes contain nicotine, a highly addictive chemical that can harm brain development which continues through the teens and into the early to mid-20s. Some e-cigarette pods can have up to as much nicotine as a pack of traditional cigarettes and some e-cigarette products that market themselves as having zero nicotine have been found to contain nicotine.<sup>6,7</sup> Young people who use e-cigarettes may be more likely to transition to regular cigarettes and increase the frequency and amount of cigarette smoking in the future.<sup>8</sup> Bystanders can breathe in exhaled or “secondhand” aerosols from an e-cigarette use.

## **Closing**

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Institute of Medicine recommends increasing the minimum sale age to 21 to delay access and initiation among youth.<sup>11,12</sup> On December 20, 2019, legislation was signed raising the federal minimum age of sale of tobacco products from 18 to 21 years, effective immediately. Prior to this, 19 states (including our neighboring state of Massachusetts), the District of Columbia, and at least 450 localities (including two towns in Rhode Island, Barrington and Central Falls) have raised the sale age of tobacco products from 18 to 21.<sup>10</sup> Nationally, 88% of adult cigarette users who smoke daily report starting by the age of 18, and 99% of all tobacco initiation occurs by age 26.<sup>13</sup>

For all these reasons, we urge you to pass House Bill 7041. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

## **References**

- <sup>1</sup> Surgeon General. (2018). *Surgeon General's Advisory on E-Cigarette Use Among Youth*. Retrieved February 28, 2019 from <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/surgeon-generals-advisory-on-e-cigarette-use-among-youth-2018.pdf>
- <sup>2,3</sup> Rhode Island Department of Health, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1997-2019
- <sup>4</sup> E-cigarette use among youth and young adults: A report of the Surgeon General - Executive summary. (2016). Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- <sup>5,9</sup> Public health consequences of e-cigarettes. 2018. Washington, DC: The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.
- <sup>6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). Quick facts on the risks of e-cigarettes for kids, teens, and young adults. Retrieved October 17, 2018, from [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- <sup>7</sup> Goniewicz, M., et al. (2015). Nicotine levels in electronic cigarette refill solutions: A comparative analysis of products from the United States, Korea, and Poland. *Int J Drug Policy*, 26(6), 583–588.
- <sup>8</sup> Barrington-Trimis, J., et al. (2016). E-cigarettes and future cigarette use. *Pediatrics*, 138. (1), e20160379.
- <sup>10</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. (n.d.). *States and localities that have raised the minimum legal sale age for tobacco products to 21*. Retrieved November 10, 2018, from [www.tobaccofreekids.org](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org)
- <sup>11</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics. (n.d.). *Tobacco to 21: An easy way to save young lives*. Retrieved August 1, 2017, from [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)
- <sup>12</sup> *Public health implications of raising the minimum age of legal access to tobacco products*. Washington, DC (2015): Institute of Medicine of the National Academies.
- <sup>13</sup> *Preventing tobacco use among youth and young adults: A report of the Surgeon General: Executive summary*. (2012). Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.