



TO: Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair  
Senator Jeff Kruse, Vice Chair  
Senate Health Care Committee

FROM: Deborah Rumsey, Executive Director  
Children's Health Alliance

SUBJECT: SB 1559, Amendments to Raise the Tobacco Purchase Age to 21

The Children's Health Alliance (CHA) is pleased to offer this statement for the record in support of SB1559, which will raise the minimum legal age to purchase tobacco to age 21.

CHA is an association of over 100 primary care pediatricians and nurse practitioners across five counties in the Portland/Vancouver and Salem Metropolitan areas. They provide care for approximately 140,000 children in Oregon. The Alliance was established in 1998 to promote a culture of quality improvement among member practices with the mission to improve care for all children.

CHA pediatricians consider tobacco use and exposure to be a significant threat to the health of our patients. Preventing children from starting to smoke is one of the most important strategies to reduce tobacco-related diseases. It is well-known that nearly 90 percent of all adult tobacco users started smoking before they turned 18. Many of those young smokers will die early. According to the 2014 U.S. Surgeon General's report: "This year alone, nearly one-half million adults will still die prematurely because of smoking. If we continue on our current trajectory, 5.6 million children alive today who are younger than 18 years of age will die prematurely as a result of smoking."

The American Academy of Pediatrics also supports raising the tobacco purchase age to 21. Doing so would lead to substantial reductions in tobacco use, improve the health of Americans across lifespan, and save millions of lives. This strategy is supported by a majority of Americans. A 2015 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study showed that 75 percent of the American public, including 70 percent of current smokers, supported a minimum tobacco purchase age of 21.



In summary, increasing the minimum age to purchase tobacco to age 21 is an important public policy step that will help protect Oregon's children from tobacco use in their formative years and prevent tobacco-related diseases as adults.