



American  
Heart  
Association.

## **Health Groups Applaud Lawmakers for Bill to Raise the Tobacco Sales Age to 21** *Legislation will protect kids from dangerous nicotine addiction and save lives*

MADISON, Wis., August 27, 2019 — As Wisconsin's next generation heads back to school, a new bill aims to protect their health. A bill to raise the sales age of tobacco products to 21 years old was introduced in the state Legislature recently. The American Heart Association and other health groups applaud the bill [SB 364] which would help prevent young people from starting down a path that leads to addiction, chronic diseases and premature death.

Nicotine and tobacco use are on the rise among younger Wisconsinites, due to the explosion of e-cigarettes. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services reports at least one in five Wisconsin high schoolers use e-cigarettes. "Tobacco 21 legislation is a key strategy to reduce this alarming rate, since 18-year-old seniors are often a supply source for their younger classmates," said Nicole Hudzinski, government relations director at the American Heart Association. "Tobacco 21 would help remove tobacco products and e-cigarettes from schools altogether, protecting the health of all students."

Nearly 95% of smokers start before they turn 21<sup>1</sup> and thousands of Wisconsin teens become new daily smokers every year<sup>2</sup>. "Your brain continues to develop well into young adulthood, but nicotine slows that critical development in teenagers who smoke and use e-cigarettes," said Dr. Sarang Baman, chair of the American Heart Association's Wisconsin Advocacy Committee. "By delaying the tobacco sales age to 21, we can reduce the number of teenagers becoming lifelong smokers who will face years of addiction and an increased risk of heart disease and cancer."

The American Heart Association is joined by many other organizations in supporting this bill, including Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, Marshfield Clinic Health System, Marshfield Children's Hospital, UW Health, American Family Children's Hospital, and Boys and Girls Club of Wisconsin. This group is thankful to lawmakers for introducing and co-sponsoring the bill. As the bill works through the legislature, the American Heart Association looks forward to working with lawmakers to identify opportunities that will strengthen the bill and protect the health of our next generation.

To join the American Heart Association's grassroots efforts on this issue, please visit:  
<https://www.youarethecure.org/wiraisetheage/>

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### **About the American Heart Association**

The American Heart Association is a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. We are dedicated to ensuring equitable health in all communities. Through collaboration with numerous organizations, and powered by millions of volunteers, we fund innovative research, advocate for the public's health and share lifesaving resources. The Dallas-based organization has been a

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<sup>1</sup> Tobacco 21. (2019). Retrieved May 3, 2019, from <https://countertobacco.org/policy/tobacco-21/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/wisconsin>

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