



January 11, 2018

The Honorable Ron Nirenberg
Office of the Mayor
City Hall, 4th Floor
100 Military Plaza
San Antonio, TX 78205

Dear Mayor Nirenberg:

On behalf of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, we write today to offer the strong support of our organizations for the ordinance that would raise the minimum age of sale for all tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes, to the age of 21 in San Antonio. Often referred to as Tobacco 21, this ordinance will help reduce the number of young people who use and become addicted to tobacco products and, ultimately, help to reduce the disease and premature death that these products cause.

Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of death in Texas and the United States and is responsible for over \$8.8 billion in health care costs in Texas each year. Tobacco use almost always begins during adolescence and young adulthood. About 95 percent of adult smokers started before they turned 21. The 2014 Surgeon General's report, *the Health Consequences of Smoking – 50 Years of Progress*, found that if more is not done to combat tobacco use, 5.6 million of today's youth will die prematurely from a smoking-related illness.

Raising the tobacco age to 21 will help keep tobacco out of high schools, where younger teens often obtain tobacco products from older students. It will also help counter the tobacco industry's efforts to target young people at a critical time when many transition from experimenting with tobacco to smoking regularly. The tobacco industry spent over \$8.9 billion dollars marketing its products in 2015 (more than \$600 million in Texas alone), according to the Federal Trade Commission.

A 2015 National Academy of Medicine report found that raising the tobacco age to 21 will significantly reduce youth tobacco use and save thousands of lives. Specifically, raising the tobacco age to 21 nationwide could prevent 223,000 deaths, including 50,000 fewer dying from lung cancer, the nation's leading cancer killer. The report predicts that raising the age will help keep 15-17 year olds and older teens from starting to smoke. These reductions accumulate over time to reduce adult smoking by 12 percent over the long term.

Raising the tobacco age to 21 also has broad public support. A citywide poll from October 2017 found that nearly 78 percent of residents favor a citywide law to raise the tobacco to 21.

As of today, five states have raised the tobacco age to 21, along with more than 285 localities across the country. We call on you to join these communities by supporting this ordinance to reduce the number of young people who start on a path that too often leads to addiction, disease and premature death.

Sincerely,



Christopher W. Hansen
President
American Cancer Society Cancer Action
Network



Harold P. Wimmer
National President and CEO
American Lung Association



Nancy A. Brown
Chief Executive Officer
American Heart Association



Matt Myers
President
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

CC: The Honorable Roberto C. Treviño, District 1
The Honorable William 'Cruz' Shaw, District 2
The Honorable Rebecca J. Viagran, District 3
The Honorable Rey Saldana, District 4
The Honorable Shirley Gonzales, District 5
The Honorable Greg Brockhouse, District 6
The Honorable Ana Sandoval, District 7
The Honorable Manny Pelaez, District 8
The Honorable John Courage, District 9
The Honorable Clayton Perry, District 10