

Resolution in Support of Raising the Minimum Legal Sales Age for Tobacco & Vapor Products from 18 to 21

WHEREAS, the nature of tobacco products has expanded to now include nicotine delivery systems and vapor products, including flavors; and

WHEREAS, the Minimum Legal Sales Age (MLSA) for tobacco products is the minimum age of persons to which a retailer may sell tobacco products, putting the onus of an offense on the seller; and

WHEREAS, tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, killing more than 8,300 Washingtonians each year, and causing cancer, heart disease, respiratory diseases, and other health disorders, that add an estimated \$2.81 billion in annual health care costs in Washington State according to the WA State Department of Health; and

WHEREAS, the US Surgeon General reports about 95 percent of adult smokers begin smoking before they turn 21 and growing numbers begin before the age of 18; and

WHEREAS, the Surgeon General further reported that adolescence and young adulthood are critical periods of growth and development, and exposure to nicotine has lasting, adverse consequences on brain development; and

WHEREAS, the Surgeon General has stated that “e-cigarette use poses a significant – and avoidable – health risk to young people in the United States. Besides increasing the possibility of addiction and long-term harm to brain development and respiratory health, e-cigarette use is associated with the use of other tobacco products that can do even more damage to the body”; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey determined that of 12th graders, 20% used e-cigarettes; 11% smoked cigarettes; 9% smoked cigars, and 6% used smokeless tobacco; and

WHEREAS, on September 12, 2018, FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb announced that youth use of electronic-cigarettes and vapor products has reached an "epidemic level of growth", and significant efforts must be taken to prevent a new generation from becoming addicted to nicotine; and

WHEREAS, in 2015 the Institute of Medicine (IOM) concluded that raising the legal age for sales of all tobacco products to 21 would reduce initiation of tobacco use among youth, especially those aged 15-17, improve health across the lifespan, and save lives; and

WHEREAS, the IOM projected that there would be approximately 223,000 fewer premature deaths, 50,000 fewer deaths from lung cancer, and 4.2 million fewer years of life lost for persons born in the US between 2000 and 2019, and result in near-immediate reductions in preterm births, low birth weight babies, and sudden infant death syndrome if the legal age for tobacco product sales was raised to 21 nationwide; and

WHEREAS, the states of California, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Oregon, Hawaii and Maine and over 350 localities, including New York City, Chicago, San Antonio, Boston, Cleveland, Minneapolis, and Kansas City (MO & KS) have raised the minimum age for sale of tobacco to 21; and

WHEREAS, legislation to raise the minimum legal sales age for tobacco and vapor products from 18 to 21 has been introduced in the Washington State Legislature but has not yet been enacted; and

WHEREAS, the 1st LD Democrats want to protect the young people of our district from the devastating impacts of tobacco and nicotine addiction;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the 1st District Democrats call upon our representatives in the State Legislature to raise the MLSA for tobacco products from 18 to 21, including removal of the Purchase, Use and Possession (PUP) law, and simultaneously run a bill to remove the PUP law for ages 18 and under; and

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we also call upon the Public Health Departments for Seattle, King County, Snohomish County and Washington State, to provide for best practices enforcement, with annual retailer compliance checks, and ongoing tobacco prevention education for the community; and

THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be will sent to the WA State Democrats Central Committee for consideration at their next meeting.

Submitted on November 7, 2018 to the 1st LD Democrats Issues Committee by Sherry Krainick, as originated by Tobacco-Free Kids and Tobacco at 21.

Recommended DO PASS by the 1st LD Democrats Issues Committee on November 12, 2018.