

**MEDICAL SOCIETY**  
of the  
**STATE OF NEW YORK**

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*Division of Governmental Affairs*  
**MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT**

**PASSED ASSEMBLY**

**A. 558-A (Rosenthal)**

**ON SENATE CALENDAR**

**S. 2833 (Savino)**

**AN ACT to amend the public health law and the penal law, in relation to increasing the purchasing age for tobacco products from eighteen to twenty-one**

This measure would increase the purchasing age for tobacco products from eighteen to 21 years of age. **The Medical Society of the State of New York supports this bill.**

The best way to reduce the number of people who are addicted to tobacco is to prevent them from starting to smoke. Addiction to tobacco products occurs relatively quickly once someone begins to smoke. Once someone becomes addicted to tobacco it is very difficult to quit. Data suggest the earlier the onset of smoking; the more severe the addiction is likely to be and 90% of all smokers begin before age 20. Each day, 6,000 children under 18 years of age smoke their first cigarette. Children most often try their first cigarette with a friend or peer who already smokes.

Of the 50,000 plus youth who become regular smokers, half of them will eventually die from smoking-related diseases, including cancer, heart disease, emphysema, asthma and hypertension, among others. Health care costs and lost productivity for the under aged smokers of today will cost the state over \$11 billion. Moreover, the earlier people begin to smoke, the higher their risk for developing lung cancer and other major health problems. Preventing tobacco use among young people is a critical step in reducing growing health care costs and ensuring the health of future generations.

The Medical Society of the State of New York has longstanding policy to increase the purchase age for tobacco products to 21, as a means of preventing all youth from starting to smoke. *MSSNY Policy 300.951--Proposals Against the Promotion of Tobacco to Children in New York State* calls upon the Medical Society of the State of New York to support legislation to: a) limit the promotion of tobacco and cigar products, smokeless tobacco products, electronic cigarettes or other unregulated nicotine

delivery devices in the state; (b) prohibit the sale of tobacco and cigar products, smokeless tobacco products, electronic cigarettes or other unregulated nicotine delivery devices to anyone under 21 years of age; (c) increase the penalties for the sale of any of these products to persons under 21 years of age.

A March 2015 report by the Institute of Medicine concluded that raising the purchase price to 21 will have a substantial positive impact on public health and will significantly reduce the number of adolescents and young adults who start smoking, reduce smoking-caused deaths, and immediately improve the health of adolescents, young adults and young mothers who should be deterred from smoking.

**For the above reasons, the Medical Society of the State of New York supports this measure and urges that it be passed.**

**Respectfully submitted;**

**Division of Governmental Affairs**

**PFC/Support  
3/29/19**