
KANSAS CITY
MEDICAL SOCIETY

Dear Local Leaders:

As the professional association representing more than 4,000 physicians throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area, we heartily endorse “Tobacco 21,” a policy proposal recommended by the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce’s HealthyKC effort. The proposal would raise the age of sale for tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, from 18 to 21 years of age. We are very pleased with this important community health initiative.

Tobacco use remains a leading cause of preventable death in Missouri, Kansas, and the nation. Indeed, tobacco use is the common thread across the region’s leading causes of morbidity and mortality - such as cancer, heart disease, asthma, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorders. As the physicians responsible for treating the disease burden in the Kansas City region, we are always seeking opportunities to prevent disease before it begins and Tobacco 21 policies are a strong strategy to do so.

Most smokers try their first cigarette around the age of 12 and become committed and regular smokers by the age of 21. Indeed, a full 95% of long-term smokers began before the age of 21. Preventing tobacco use requires a narrow focus on the critical years between 12 and 21 when experimentation turns into habit and ultimately into an addiction. Unfortunately, most youth who experiment with tobacco acquire cigarettes from friends, many of whom are old enough to legally purchase tobacco products and bring them into schools.

By raising the age of sale for tobacco to 21, we can have a dramatic impact on access to cigarettes for adolescents, which will ultimately lead to a decrease in tobacco addiction in young and older adults.

On behalf of our members, we stand firmly in support of the Tobacco 21 effort and urge your support as well.

Sincerely,



Stephen Salanski, MD, President, KCMS