

Statement on veto of SB 2332 – Tobacco 21

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From IAFP President Asim K. Jaffer, MD, FAAFP (Peoria, IL)

The Illinois Academy of Family Physicians (IAFP) is deeply disappointed that Governor Rauner vetoed a proven tobacco reduction strategy. Twenty-six Illinois municipalities, including my home city of Peoria, have passed a Tobacco 21 ordinance; the rest of the state deserves the same protections.

National data show that about 95 percent of adult smokers begin smoking before they turn 21. The ages of 18 to 21 are also a critical period when many smokers move from experimental smoking to regular, daily use. While less than half of adult smokers (46 percent) become daily smokers before age 18, four out of five do so before they turn 21.

Nicotine is addictive, and adolescents and young adults are more susceptible to its effects because their brains are still developing. Delaying the age when young people first experiment with or begin using tobacco can reduce the risk that they will become addicted smokers.

It's important to note that U.S. military leadership supports policies to reduce nicotine addiction and tobacco use. The Department of Defense and the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force have

each set goals to become tobacco-free by approving actions “to ensure a comprehensive tobacco policy that assists with preventing initiation of tobacco use, helping those who want to quit using tobacco succeed, and decreasing exposure to secondhand smoke for all our people.”

When 18-year-olds can legally purchase tobacco and nicotine products, they become an easy pipeline to younger friends and relatives. With the staggering increase in e-cigarette and JUUL use among high school students, we must use every available strategy to protect our kids from these emerging and highly addictive products.

Our work will continue until Illinois is a Tobacco 21 state.