



American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™
Alabama Chapter



Alabama
CHAPTER

Alabama
Dermatology
Society



ALABAMA ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS

Feb. 9, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Physician Groups Issue Joint Statement in Support of Raising Alabama's Legal Tobacco Age to 21

MONTGOMERY — The Medical Association of the State of Alabama, the Alabama Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Cardiology-Alabama Chapter, the Alabama Dermatology Society, and the Alabama Academy of Family Physicians have joined in support of legislation that would raise Alabama's legal tobacco age from 19 to 21.

"Research has shown our children are at the greatest risk of becoming smokers because they begin to experiment with cigarettes around the age of 18," said Medical Association President Jerry Harrison, M.D. "Smoking remains one of the most preventable causes of heart disease by making the heart work harder and raising the blood pressure, which can trigger a stroke. So, raising Alabama's legal tobacco age limit by a couple of years in order to add years to our children's lives only makes sense."

A study published last year in the journal *Pediatrics* showed raising the minimum tobacco purchase age to 21 would likely have significant public health benefits, including 249,000 fewer premature deaths and 45,000 fewer lung cancer deaths for those born between 2010 and 2019. The study also showed that younger adolescents were more likely to support the initiative, and past research has shown that up to 75 percent of adults favor the higher purchase age for tobacco products.

"This legislation is one of the most effective actions Alabama can make to ensure the health and safety of our children," said Susan Walley, M.D., FAAP, member of the AL-AAP Executive Board and the Executive Committee of the American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Tobacco Control. "Any tobacco use in children and adolescents is not safe. Adolescents are more likely to become addicted to nicotine, even with experimental use, which has a 'gateway effect' to other substances of abuse. Once adolescents start using tobacco products, whether from electronic cigarettes or traditional combustible cigarettes or cigars, they risk a lifelong habit that kills one-in-three smokers from a multitude of diseases."

According to the Alabama Dermatology Society, smoking is bad for the skin in multiple ways – ill effects that can begin in the teenage years. In addition to causing premature skin aging and wrinkles, smoking nearly doubles one's risk of developing psoriasis. Even more worrisome, studies show smokers boost their risk for developing squamous cell carcinoma of the skin by 52 percent. Squamous cell carcinoma is the second most common form of skin cancer, and, while often treatable, can have deadly consequences.

A bill sponsored by Rep. Chris Pringle (R-Mobile) – [HB 47](#) – would raise the age from 19 to 21 for anyone in Alabama looking to purchase, use, or possess tobacco products in Alabama. This proposed legislation includes any tobacco, tobacco product or alternative nicotine product. Our organizations fully support the passage of this legislation for the lives of Alabama's children.

For more information or comment, please contact:

Lori M. Quiller, APR, Medical Association of the State of Alabama, (334) 954-2580

Linda Lee, APR, Alabama Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics, (334) 954-2543

Christina Smith, American College of Cardiology-Alabama Chapter, and Alabama Dermatology Society, (205) 972-8510

Jeff Arrington, Alabama Academy of Family Physicians, (334) 954-2570