



# MARYLAND Department of Health

Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary

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## **Maryland becomes 13<sup>th</sup> state to raise minimum legal sales age for tobacco products to 21**

*MDH will launch statewide campaign to get the word out*

**Baltimore, MD** — The Maryland Department of Health applauds the Maryland General Assembly and Governor Larry Hogan for passing legislation (House Bill 1169) increasing the age from 18 to 21 for the sales of tobacco products and electronic smoking devices (ESDs). Over the coming months, MDH will launch a statewide campaign to get the word out to young adults under age 21 and retailers about the new law, which goes into effect Oct. 1, 2019.

MDH Secretary Robert R. Neall said the state has been tracking a troubling increase in tobacco use in recent years among youth and young adults, particularly since the introduction of e-cigarettes, also referred to as vapes and other names. Maryland's Tobacco 21 law covers e-cigarettes, taking the important step of defining them as tobacco products.

“We know most smokers start when they are underage and their brains are still developing,” Neall said. “This can quickly lead to nicotine addiction and also make them more susceptible to other addictions. This is a public health crisis that needs to be addressed immediately.”

Maryland's new law covers all individuals under the age of 21, with the exception of *active duty* military age 18 to 20. Approximately 780,000 Marylanders use tobacco products, most of them starting before age 21. This new law aims to protect the 255,000 Marylanders between ages 18 to 20 from developing a nicotine addiction.

Nationally, from 2017 to 2018, use of tobacco products grew by nearly 40 percent among U.S. high school students, with the use of electronic smoking devices increasing by 78 percent. This increase equates to an *additional* 1.5 million tobacco users nationwide.

“Maryland data show that electronic smoking devices are by far the most commonly used product among our high school students,” said Dawn Berkowitz, director of MDH's Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control. “Most of these popular candy- and fruit-

flavored products that are attractive to youth contain high levels of nicotine. In addition to addiction, the nicotine in these products leads to reduced impulse control, attention deficit, and other learning and mood disorders in youth and young adults. It's troubling that we often hear of older high school students supplying these tobacco products to their younger peers."

Raising the minimum legal sales age to 21 will help counter this problem in Maryland, as it joins 12 other states and more than 450 cities and towns, including neighboring Washington D.C., Virginia and Delaware. Implementing Tobacco 21 in Chicago resulted in a decline of more than 30 percent in cigarette and electronic smoking device use among 18- to 20-year-olds.

Laura Hale, State Government Relations Director at the American Heart Association, said: "Raising the minimum legal sales age for tobacco from 18 to 21 is a major step in protecting young people in Maryland from the harms of tobacco, including e-cigarettes and vapes. We thank Governor Hogan for recognizing the importance of protecting Maryland's future generations from a lifetime of addiction and tobacco-related death and disease."

MDH is currently updating all resources to support retailers in complying with the new law and over the next several months will mail information and signage directly to licensed tobacco retailers across the state. Resources will also be posted on MDH's *Responsible Tobacco Retailer Program* website, [www.NoTobaccoSalesToMinors.com](http://www.NoTobaccoSalesToMinors.com).

To assist Marylanders wanting to quit tobacco products, MDH operates the free *Maryland Tobacco Quitline* (1-800-QUIT-NOW), offering confidential phone/web/text counseling 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provides nicotine replacement therapy (patch and gum) for residents 18 and older. The Quitline also offers specialized services for youth ages 13 to 17. More information can be found at [www.SmokingStopsHere.com](http://www.SmokingStopsHere.com).

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*Marylanders in need of treatment for substance use disorders can locate treatment facilities at <http://goo.gl/nlfGm0>. Individuals can call 211 and press 1, or text their zip code to 898-211, to speak with crisis call specialists. For information related to fighting addiction in Maryland, visit <http://goo.gl/KvEzQw>.*