

## **RAISING THE TOBACCO AGE TO 21**

On December 20, 2019, **the minimum age of tobacco sales raised from 18 to 21 years**. It is now illegal for a retailer to sell tobacco products, including cigarettes, cigars, e-cigarettes, to anyone under age 21. **The State of Georgia follows the Federal guidelines with regard to the age change**. This policy change is very important, one reason being that vaping has become an epidemic amongst our youth.

Increasing the minimum sale age to 21 has been an important strategy in reducing smoking and other tobacco use among youth. Other strong measures that help this policy change are the **prohibition of flavored tobacco products, higher tobacco costs and taxes, strong smoke-free laws, and well-funded, sustained tobacco prevention and cessation programs** (U.S. State and Local Issues, 2020).

Though there is no recent data on the new policy change, according to a 2015 Report from the National Academy of Medicine (Tobacco, 2020), **increasing the age to 21 could decrease tobacco use by 12% and decrease deaths by 10%. Early onset of smoking will be reduced by 25 percent** for 15-17-year-olds and 15 percent for 18-20-year-olds. Nationwide, this could **prevent 223,000 deaths and fewer lung cancer deaths**.

### **KEY FACTS:**

- MOST ADULT SMOKERS START SMOKING BEFORE AGE 21
- TOBACCO COMPANIES TARGET KIDS AND YOUNG ADULTS
- RAISING THE SALE AGE WILL HELP KEEP TOBACCO OUT OF MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS

### References

*Tobacco*. (2020, January 3). Retrieved from American Lung Association:

<https://www.lung.org/our-initiatives/tobacco/cessation-and-prevention/tobacco-21-laws.html>

*U.S. State and Local Issues*. (2020, January 9). Retrieved from Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids:

<https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/what-we-do/us/sale-age-21>