

## **Tobacco 21 Testimony – SB 1255**

### **Corey Surber, Saint Alphonsus**

#### **Chairman Siddoway and Members of the Committee:**

- My name is Corey Surber, and I serve as Director of Advocacy for Saint Alphonsus
- I appreciate the opportunity to come before you today to support Senate Bill 1255, a policy intended to decrease youth initiation of tobacco use, which will save thousands of lives and millions in healthcare costs into the future.
- Saint Alphonsus and other Tobacco 21 Coalition members statewide support SB 1255 for the primary reasons that:
  - Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease and premature death in the U.S., and one of the largest drivers of healthcare costs. According to the commissioner of the FDA, "Cigarettes are the only legal consumer product that, when used as intended, will kill half of all long-term users."
  - While the health effects of tobacco use are not typically seen in young people, 95% of current adult smokers start before age 21
  - It is between the ages of 18 and 21 that experimental use transitions to regular daily use
  - Each year 700 Idaho youth become new regular daily smokers, and 1/3 will likely die prematurely from this addiction. The Idaho tobacco use rate for young adults age 18-24 is 13.8%.
  - What is truly concerning is that 25% of Idaho high schoolers say they have used electronic cigarettes in the past 30 days, and these youth are 3x more likely to end up using tobacco products.

- About 30,000 Idaho kids now under age 18 will ultimately die prematurely if we continue on our current course
- Cost due to tobacco-related illness: \$508 M each year in Idaho, or \$640 for each Idaho household
- Why Raise the Age?
  - 2015 report by Institute of Medicine concluded raising the age will have a substantial positive impact on public health and save lives.
    - Predicts raising the age will, over time, reduce the smoking rate by about 12% and smoking-related deaths by 10%, which translates into 223,000 fewer premature deaths, 50,000 fewer deaths from lung cancer, and 4.2 million fewer years of life lost.
    - Tobacco industry documents state that they know if they do not capture new users by their early 20s, they never will.
    - Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the addictive effects of nicotine.
    - A strong majority of Idahoans support raising the age, and when poll respondents were asked to pick between the freedom of choice vs. reducing costs and saving lives – 60% of them sided with raising the age.
- Tobacco 21 Effectiveness Data:
  - State policies in NJ, HI, CA, OR, and ME are all too recent to have effectiveness data at the state level.
  - Multiple examples of effectiveness at municipal level, including NY, Chicago – although they implemented multiple strategies simultaneously so difficult to tease apart direct attributable impact

- In 2005, Needham, Massachusetts implemented the law to raise the tobacco sales age to 21. They were the first town in the country to do so, and 4 years after the legislation was implemented smoking in Needham high school decreased by 47%. In 2006, before the legislation was fully enforced, Needham had a 13% smoking rate compared to a 15% in neighboring communities. In 2010, the youth smoking rate in Needham decreased to 6.7%, while the surrounding communities' rate only decreased to 12.4%.
- With that, I would like to thank Senator Fred Martin for bringing this bill forward, and I am happy to stand for any questions the committee may have.