

Raise the Age to 21

Establish Tobacco Retailer Permitting System to Protect NC Youth



NC needs to raise its minimum age to purchase tobacco products to 21 to match the new federal age requirement passed in 2019.

- Many young people transition from experimental use to regular, daily use between the ages of 18 to 21.
- It's confusing to retailers and consumers to have separate ages for state and federal law.

5x MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

10x HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

From 2011-2019, NC saw more than a **five-fold** increase in e-cigarette use among middle schoolers and a **ten-fold** increase among high school students. Young people addicted to nicotine struggle with concentration and impulse control, negatively impacting learning and behavior in school.



NC could lose over \$4 million in Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant money

(money NC uses to pay for drug treatment, including opioid use disorder) through penalties under the federal Synar amendment if sales to youth are too high in required annual inspections. NC came very close to exceeding the Synar limit in 2019.



Most NC young people obtain their e-cigarettes from retailers. In monitoring checks conducted as part of the state's settlement with JUUL in 2021, **57.7% of**

tobacco retailers did not check for ID. We know that **the most important factor** in whether a retailer will sell tobacco to underage persons in NC is whether the retailer **asks purchasers for ID.** It is critical to enforce our tobacco sales laws to keep our youth safe.

Permitting of tobacco retailers will help us **preserve NC substance use treatment dollars AND protect our youth.**

- We don't currently have a complete list of who is selling tobacco; permitting will tell us exactly who is selling it.
- The ABC Commission can work with retailers to gain compliance with underage sales laws, levying fines and suspending permits if needed.



Forty states (including TX, FL, AL, MS, GA) require licensing/permitting of tobacco retailers as a tool to enforce their tobacco laws. NC needs this tool too.



Over 40% of tobacco product purchase attempts by underage buyers resulted in sales in January-February 2022 in ongoing data collection by East Carolina University in an eastern NC site of a multi-site National Institutes of Health study led by Rutgers University.

NC needs to raise its minimum age to purchase tobacco products from 18 to 21



NC DEPARTMENT OF
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