

June 18, 2020

Dear Chairman Harkins:

The Mississippi Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians, and the Mississippi State Medical Association strongly support the House version of Senate Bill 2596, which provides for penalties regarding the selling, furnishing, and possessing of E-cigarettes and other alternative nicotine products as well as adding language that conforms to the national requirement that tobacco sales are prohibited to those under 21.

E-cigarettes are exploding in popularity and are being used by both adolescents and adults. While many think they are a safe alternative to cigarette smoking, they are not. The solutions used in these devices contain harmful chemicals like antifreeze and nitrosamines, which can cause cancer. E-cigarettes can be used to vape marijuana, herbs, waxes, and oils. Most of the juices used in vaping products contain nicotine – the more kids vape, the more hooked they become. Vaping is dangerous, available, and addicting. It is easily accessible and even easier to hide. These products target our country's youth with appealing juice flavors and devices that look like pens, key fobs, or flash drives. Vaping is creating a generation of nicotine addicts with some as young as 14.

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. Tobacco 21 laws are an easy way to save lives. The majority of smokers (90%) start smoking by the age of 18, and most start smoking after getting a cigarette from an older friend. Raising the tobacco and alternative nicotine product purchasing age to 21 would ensure that older high school and college students cannot buy tobacco for their younger friends. The developing brains of adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the addictive properties of nicotine. Tobacco 21 language aligns with alcohol purchasing laws, which has helped reduce drunk driving fatalities and alcohol dependence among youth.

Please consider the language the House inserted in SB 2596 as it protects Mississippi's youth from the dangerous effects of tobacco and vaping. As physicians and citizens of Mississippi we support any effort that keeps these dangerous products out of the hands of our children and teens. We ask for your continued leadership on this issue and look forward to working with you to protect our patients.

Sincerely,

John W. Gaudet, MD  
President  
Mississippi Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Bill Grantham, MD  
President  
Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians

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