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Testimony in Support of House Bill 7200
AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE
DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS TO PERSONS UNDER THE AGE
TWENTY-ONE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
04 MARCH 2019

To the distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 7200, *An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems and Vapor Products to Persons Under the Age Twenty-One*. My name is Byron Kennedy and I am the Health Director for the City of New Haven Health Department. As Director, I am responsible for ensuring the health and safety of nearly 130,000 residents. I am also a physician Board Certified in Preventive Medicine, with clinical experience in providing care to both children and adults.

According to the National Academy of Medicine (NAM), raising the tobacco sale age to 21 will have a substantial positive impact on public health and save lives. Research indicates that many smokers transition to regular, daily smoking between the ages of 18 and 21. Many young adult smokers in this age group serve as a social source of tobacco products for youth. Not surprisingly, the tobacco industry has long targeted this age group. Importantly, NAM projects that by raising the minimum age, smoking rates will be reduced by 12 percent and smoking-related deaths by 10 percent.

Nationwide, a growing number of jurisdictions have increased the minimum legal sale age for tobacco products to 21 in six states—California, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Oregon, Hawaii and Maine—as well 380 localities, including New York City, Chicago, San Antonio, Boston, Washington, DC, Cleveland, Minneapolis, and both Kansas Cities. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the overwhelming majority of adults, including seven in 10 smokers, support raising the tobacco age to 21. Further, many other organizations endorse this change such as the: American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, American Medical Association, and American Public Health Association.

In summary, I strongly support HB 7200 because it will protect the health and safety of Connecticut's youth by reducing their exposure risk to tobacco and smoking. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Byron Kennedy, MD, PhD, MPH
Director of Health
City of New Haven