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EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CEO

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January 14, 2016

The Honorable Christopher J. Christie
Governor
State of New Jersey
Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

Re: New Jersey Bill (Assembly Bill 3254/Senate Bill 602) - Support

Dear Governor Christie:

On behalf of the American Medical Association (AMA) and our physician and medical student members, I am writing to express our support of Assembly Bill (AB) 3254/Senate Bill (SB) 602, legislation to raise the minimum age for purchasing tobacco and electronic smoking devices from 19 to 21 years, as well as the minimum age - from 19 to 21 years - of a person to whom a vendor may sell, offer for sale, distribute, give or furnish such products in New Jersey.

Tobacco use remains the number one cause of preventable death in the United States. Epidemiologic evidence shows that nearly 90 percent of adults who smoke on a daily basis had their first cigarette by age 18; and 90 percent of cigarettes purchased for use by those under age 18 are purchased by those aged 18 to 20.¹ Recently, the Institute of Medicine concluded that raising the tobacco age to 21 would significantly reduce smoking among youth and young adults; reduce smoking-caused deaths; and immediately improve the health of youth, young adults and young mothers who would be dissuaded from smoking. The report predicts that raising the minimum age for the sale of tobacco products to 21 will, over time, reduce the smoking rate by about 12 percent and smoking-related deaths by 10 percent. This translates into 223,000 fewer premature deaths, 50,000 fewer deaths from lung cancer, and 4.2 million fewer years of life lost.²

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), HHS, Calculated based on data in National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 2012. See also, HHH, "Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General," 2012, <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/preventing-youth-tobacco-use/full-report.pdf>. Accessed January 13, 2016

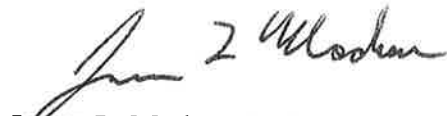
² https://iom.nationalacademies.org/~media/Files/Report%20Files/2015/TobaccoMinAge/tobacco_minimum_age_report_brief.pdf Accessed January 13, 2016

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This legislation will protect New Jersey's youth from the dangers of tobacco use and improve public health. For the aforementioned reasons, the AMA encourages you to sign AB 3254/SB 602. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Carrie Armour, JD, Senior Legislative Attorney, Advocacy Resource Center, at carrie.armour@ama-assn.org or (312) 464-4039.

Thank you for your efforts on this important public health issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James L. Madara, MD

cc: Medical Society of New Jersey