



*The following statement can be jointly attributed to Nick Lashutka, President & CEO of the Ohio Children's Hospital Association and Melissa Wervey Arnold, CEO of the Ohio Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics in response to Governor DeWine's proposal to increase Ohio's legal tobacco purchasing age from 18 to 21 years old.*

April 17, 2019 – The Ohio Children's Hospital Association (OCHA) and the Ohio Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (Ohio AAP) stand together on behalf of the 2.6 million children in Ohio in applauding Governor DeWine for his proposal to raise Ohio's minimum purchase age for tobacco products from 18 to 21. We believe it is a good step in the right direction of keeping tobacco and vaping products out of the hands of children and youth in Ohio.

In our work to save, protect and enhance the lives of Ohio children and families, members of OCHA and Ohio AAP have seen first-hand the detrimental effects that tobacco use has on the health of Ohio's children and families, as well as the corresponding healthcare costs. Through this work, we know that informed public policy, along with educational efforts for children, youth and families, such as the Ohio AAP's Smoke Free Families program, can be a powerful combination in preventing use and also achieving cessation.

The recent epidemic of vaping and e-cigarette usage has only increased risks for teen and adult addiction to tobacco products, while also increasing risks for accidental poisoning injuries of young children.

Accessibility of tobacco for teens presents an issue that must be addressed head-on to reduce the number of addicted adults in the future and the billions of dollars spent nationally for tobacco-related healthcare.

We look forward to working with the Governor, his administration and members of the Ohio General Assembly to continue discussion and policy development around this important population health issue.

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