

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Current Date:** May 16, 2017                      **End Date:** May 22, 2017  
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### **Genesee County going to court on Monday to defend its Tobacco 21 law.**

Genesee County became the first county in Michigan to pass a regulation that prohibits the sale of tobacco products to anyone under the age of 21. This regulation became effective yesterday, Monday, May 15, 2017.

On Friday, May 12, 2017 the Regulation to Prohibit the Sale of Tobacco Products to Individuals Under 21 Years of Age (Tobacco 21) was challenged in court. Approximately 230 cities, towns, and counties in 17 states have raised the minimum legal sales age to 21. California and Hawaii have enacted the law statewide. Genesee County is the very first jurisdiction to be sued to have this life-saving policy change overturned in court.

The Board of County Commissioners did not vote to rescind the regulation today. However, all parties have agreed to delay the Genesee County Health Department's enforcement of the regulation, including routine compliance checks and issuing of citations for violations of the Tobacco 21 regulation until a judge has an opportunity to hear the matter. A hearing is currently scheduled for May 22 in the Seventh Circuit Court.

The Genesee County Health Department sent nearly 600 retailers educational material on May 1, 2017 containing basic information, compliance instructions, and new signage regarding Tobacco 21.

Tobacco remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death. Ninety-five percent (95%) of adults started using tobacco products before the age of twenty-one. A March 2015 report by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), one of the most prestigious scientific authorities in the United States, strongly concluded that raising the tobacco sale age to 21 will have a substantial positive impact on public health and save lives. Based on an exhaustive review of the literature and predictive modeling, the IOM finds that raising the tobacco sale age will significantly reduce the number of adolescents and young adults who start smoking; reduce smoking-caused deaths; and immediately improve the health of adolescents, young adults, and young mothers who would be deterred from smoking, as well as their children. Specifically, 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.

The Health Department offers free help to those who are trying to quit. Call **(877) QUIT-NOW!**

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