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A RESOLUTION

Urging state lawmakers to pass legislation that would set a minimum age of 21 to purchase tobacco products, vapor products, marijuana, synthetic cannabinoids, and drug paraphernalia

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services reported that 66% of high schoolers said it is “easy to get tobacco products;” and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin’s underage tobacco sales rate is more than double the pre-pandemic rate – up to 13.6% in 2023 from 5.5% in 2019; and

WHEREAS, in 2023, 16.2% of high school aged youth in Wisconsin had used marijuana one or more times in the previous 30 days; and

WHEREAS, vaping can harm young people’s mental health and brain development by exacerbating anxiety and depression as users become addicted; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the federal legal age for purchasing tobacco was raised from 18 to 21; and

WHEREAS, 2019 Assembly Bill 422 relating to raising the legal age for tobacco and vaping to 21 passed the State Assembly, but the companion State Senate bill was not brought to a floor vote; and

WHEREAS, in his written testimony on Assembly Bill 422, then State Representative David Crowley said, “In an internal document from 1982, a tobacco researcher stated that, ‘If a man has never smoked by the age of 18, the odds are three-to-one he never will. By age 24, the odds are twenty-to-one.’ That is why it is critical to keep Wisconsin youth shielded from becoming regular smokers;” and

WHEREAS, in 2022, similar legislation was reintroduced and passed the State Assembly but was not brought to a floor vote of the State Senate; and

40 WHEREAS, these state bills received vast community support, including from
41 parents, students, healthcare workers, educators, school administrators, law
42 enforcement, and retailers; and

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44 WHEREAS, Wisconsin remains one of only eight states that has not passed a
45 statewide Tobacco 21 Law that would raise the minimum legal age in Wisconsin for
46 tobacco products to 21; and

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48 WHEREAS, local law enforcement agencies are not mandated to enforce the
49 federal legal age without a comparable law at the state; and

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51 WHEREAS, a report by the National Academy of Sciences projected that if the
52 entire country enacted Tobacco 21 legislation there would be a 25% drop in smoking
53 initiation among high school students; and

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55 WHEREAS, implementing a requirement for retailers to confirm the age of
56 customers of tobacco products, vapor products, marijuana, synthetic cannabinoids, and
57 drug paraphernalia with a photo ID is critical to ensure that retailers are compliant with
58 statewide Tobacco 21 legislation; and

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60 WHEREAS, Milwaukee County is committed to being the healthiest county in
61 Wisconsin; and

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63 WHEREAS, the safety and wellbeing of the residents and young people of
64 Milwaukee County, and the state of Wisconsin are of paramount importance to policy
65 makers, and

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67 WHEREAS, local governments and their elected representatives have a
68 responsibility to advocate for policies that promote the safety and security of their
69 communities, even when preempted from creating local regulations on this issue; and

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71 WHEREAS, the Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, at its meeting of
72 June 9, 2025, recommended adoption of File No. 25-358 (vote 5-0); now, therefore,

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74 BE IT RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors urges the
75 Wisconsin State Legislature to enact legislation to set a minimum age of 21 to purchase
76 tobacco products, vapor products, marijuana, synthetic cannabinoids, and drug
77 paraphernalia; and

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79 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
80 urges the Wisconsin State Legislature to enact legislation to implement a requirement
81 for retailers to confirm the age of customers of tobacco products, vapor products,

82 marijuana, synthetic cannabinoids, and drug paraphernalia with a photo ID to ensure
83 compliance with the Tobacco 21 legislation; and

84

85 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Milwaukee County Office of Government
86 Affairs is authorized and requested to communicate the contents of this resolution to the
87 Governor, members of the Wisconsin State Legislature and the Wisconsin Counties
88 Association to promote legislative action that will help keep Wisconsin youth healthy
89 and safe.

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92 06/09/25

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