



**Office of  
Representative Hannah E. Kane  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

*For Immediate Release*

Contact: Jessica Beliveau, 617-722-2430, [Jessica.Beliveau@mahouse.gov](mailto:Jessica.Beliveau@mahouse.gov)

May 10, 2018

## **House passes bill raising tobacco purchasing age to 21**

**BOSTON** – The minimum age to legally purchase tobacco products in Massachusetts would rise from 18 to 21 on December 31, under legislation approved by the House of Representatives.

In addition to imposing new age restrictions for tobacco purchases, House Bill 4479, *An Act to protect youth from the health risks of tobacco and nicotine addiction*, would also ban tobacco sales at health care institutions and pharmacies while implementing new restrictions on e-cigarettes. State Representative Hannah Kane, R-Shrewsbury, supported the bill, which passed the House on a vote of 146-4 on May 9.

Legislation filed by Representative Kane which included fines for sales of e-cigarettes to minors was included in the final bill. The House’s legislation also calls for the establishment of a 15-member task force to study the vaping industry and to provide recommendations for educating students about the dangers of e-cigarettes and restricting the use of these devices in and around schools. The newly formed task force has a reporting deadline of January 1, 2019.

Speaking in support of the bill on the House floor, Representative Kane said “Society today is well aware of the evidence that exists on the public health harms of smoking – and yet tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, killing nearly half a million people a year. Locally, Shrewsbury has already raised the purchasing age for tobacco products to 21 and Westborough has a public hearing scheduled later this month to consider the same. Raising the minimum age for the sale of tobacco products also brings it in line with the minimum age for purchase of alcohol and marijuana in Massachusetts.”

According to the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards (MAHB), 156 cities and towns across the state currently set 21 as the minimum legal age for the sale of tobacco products. Five other states also have similar age restrictions, including California, New Jersey, Oregon, Hawaii and Maine.

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids estimates that as many as 103,000 Massachusetts residents currently under the age of 18 will die prematurely from smoking. The organization also notes that the annual health care costs in Massachusetts directly associated with smoking total \$4.08 billion.

House Bill 4479 requires the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA), the Division of Insurance, the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Group Insurance Commission (GIC), and the office of Medicaid to review the tobacco cessation benefits offered by each health insurance plan and to compare them to those recommended by the United States Preventive Services Task Force.

Although the House bill would take effect on December 31, 2018, it provides an exemption from the age restriction for anyone who turns 18 prior to the effective date.

The bill now heads to the Senate for further action.

###