

AHA: Health and education groups applaud legislature for prioritizing youth health legislation protects kids and will save lives

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Madison, WI (February 20, 2020)— Today the state Assembly passed Assembly Bill 422 to bring Wisconsin's minimum tobacco sales age in line with the Federal sales age. The bill enjoyed bi-partisan support and will enable local law enforcement to implement a recent federal law change.

"Youth use of e-cigarettes is an epidemic; we see it everywhere in our communities," said Brad Gast, Weston resident and member of the American Heart Association's Advocacy Committee.

"We want to thank the Assembly, including the bill's champion, Representative John Spiros, for supporting this legislation. Once fully implemented, this legislation will help us curb youth usage of e-cigarettes and keep e-cigarettes and vaping out of our schools."

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services reports that 1 in 5 high schoolers use e-cigarettes and 1 in 9 middle schoolers have tried them. "We must get a handle on this crisis," said Gregg Wiczorek, Principal at Arrowhead High School in Heartland. "E-cigarettes are a public health hazard for our kids, and they are disrupting the learning environment in schools." Gregg testified at the Assembly public hearing on AB 422, showing legislators just a fraction of the e-cigarette devices he has confiscated this past year.

“Last year, we at Children’s Wisconsin saw firsthand the dangers of youth e-cigarette use.

Dozens of kids came to our emergency room with severe respiratory complications linked to vaping,” said Louella Amos, MD, pulmonologist at Children’s Wisconsin and associate professor at the Medical College of Wisconsin. “Since then, we have been working in clinic and throughout the community to educate youth about the dangers of vaping and referring them to cessation opportunities. I am thankful to see that our elected leaders are taking steps to help us with these efforts.”

The bill is supported by numerous organizations, including the American Heart Association,

Ascension Wisconsin, Association of WI School Administrators, Children’s Wisconsin, Medical College of WI, Rural Schools Alliance, Southeastern WI School Alliance, WI Academy of Family Physicians, WI American Academy of Pediatrics, WI Association of School Boards, Inc., WI Association of School Business Officials, WI Association of School District Administrators, WI Association of School Nurses, WI Association of School Personnel Administrators, WI Council for Administrators Special Services, and WI Retired Educators Association.

Assembly bill 422 passed as amended and now heads to the Senate. The companion bill, Senate Bill 364, is currently in the Senate Health Committee awaiting a public hearing.

To join the American Heart Association’s grassroots efforts on this issue, please visit:

<https://www.yourethecure.org/wiraisetheage/>