



Please direct inquiries to:

John Forester (SAA), 608-242-1370

Dan Rossmiller (WASB) 608-512-1720

Kim Kaukl (WiRSA) 608-553-0689

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **September 13, 2019**

Education Groups Call on State Legislature to Respond to Teen Vaping Crisis by Acting on Tobacco 21

*Push for action comes from Wisconsin School Administrators Alliance,
Wisconsin Association of School Boards and Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance*

MADISON – Three organizations representing Wisconsin public school leaders have joined together to call on the state legislature to take prompt action on Senate Bill 364 and Assembly Bill 422, companion measures that would address the crisis of teen vaping across Wisconsin. The groups—including the Wisconsin School Administrators Alliance (SAA), the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) and the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA)—have released the following joint statement:

“As we begin another school year here in Wisconsin, we are facing a true epidemic of vaping among children, teens and young adults. As e-cigarettes and vaping products have become more widely available, we have seen an explosion in the numbers of young people using these products. In Wisconsin, one in five high schoolers use e-cigarettes. Additionally, one in nine middle schoolers have tried e-cigarettes. (These are self-reported numbers. Actual usage may be higher.) Wisconsin schools are on the front lines in dealing with the fallout from rising teen nicotine addiction.

As we all read the headlines that health officials from across the nation are investigating more than 450 possible cases of a potentially deadly respiratory illness related to e-cigarettes, we believe there is more urgency to take action now to protect our kids. Together, we urge the state legislature to act on Senate Bill 364 and Assembly Bill 422, authored by Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) and Representative John Spiros (R-Marshfield).

The bill, known as Tobacco 21, would raise the minimum sales age for cigarettes, tobacco products or nicotine products to 21, up from the current 18. It would also establish a minimum sales age of 21 for vapor products. By prohibiting the purchase of vapor products by or on behalf of a person under the age of 21, this legislation would help prevent underage youth from buying or getting e-cigarettes and other harmful products from their older friends and dramatically improve our efforts to remove these dangerous products from Wisconsin’s schools.

Just like raising the legal drinking age from 18 to 21 helped to remove alcohol from high school campuses, we hope this bill will produce similar results when it comes to e-cigarettes and other dangerous products that harm the health of young students and disrupt learning environments in schools.

We applaud the leadership of Senator Marklein and Representative Spiros for introducing the Tobacco 21 legislation. We urge the members of our state legislature to do what 18 states and the District of Columbia have already done—raise the minimum sales age for tobacco products to 21.”

###