



March of Dimes Foundation

NE Region

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Dear House Committee on Human Services:

The mission of the March of Dimes is to improve the health of women of childbearing age, infants and children by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality.

Our foundation is in support of H.93, which would raise the minimum age to purchase tobacco products from 18 to 21 years of age. On average, ninety percent of adult smokers begin smoking during teenage years. Raising the minimum age required to purchase tobacco products can significantly improve public health outcomes for women, children, and infants by delaying or preventing altogether the initiation of smoking or use of other tobacco products.

In the United States, an average of one in every ten pregnant women smokes. For expecting mothers, tobacco use during pregnancy increases the risk of premature delivery in babies and directly affects fetal growth. According to the 2014 Surgeon General's report, in the last 50 years, 10,000 babies have died from sudden infant death syndrome or complications of prematurity, low birth weight, and other conditions as a result of parental smoking.

Prenatal and postnatal environmental smoke exposure have proved devastating for the developing fetus as well as for young children. For instance, exposure to tobacco smoke in utero or in the environment after birth has been linked to increased incidence of respiratory infections, ear infections, and behavioral disorders. Children and infants who are exposed to prenatal maternal smoking and in-home environmental tobacco smoke have a high incidence of severe asthma. Children and infants are often hospitalized longer for asthma and respiratory infections when compared to children who are not exposed to tobacco.

Failure to decrease the use of tobacco and environmental tobacco exposure will cause continued poor health outcomes for mothers, infants, and children. Because the vast majority of smokers begin using tobacco in their teenage years, this bill targets those under the age of 21 with the goal of decreasing the prevalence of tobacco use among adolescents. The March of Dimes supports legislative and regulatory action to reduced exposure to tobacco smoke among pregnant women and infants. We ask that you support H.93, the and look forward to working with you to ensure that all babies are given the best chance at a healthy start in life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Abigail Rogers', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Abigail Rogers
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