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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 13, 2016

Tobacco 21 Law to Take Effect on April 14, 2016

CLEVELAND – Effective Thursday, April 14, 2016, the minimum sales age for tobacco products will be twenty-one. The Tobacco 21 law (Ordinance No. 737-15) was passed in December of 2015. The law states that no one can give, sell or otherwise distribute cigarettes, other tobacco products, alternative nicotine products, or papers used to roll cigarettes to anyone under the age of 21.

As part of compliance, all tobacco product retailers are required to post a sign informing customers of the minimum sales age for these items in a place that's highly visible. If a customer looks like they may be under 30 years old, the retailer must ask for proof of age. Acceptable documents to show proof of age are a valid photo driver's license or non-driver ID card issued by a state or other U.S. or Canadian government agency; a valid passport; or a photo ID issued by the armed forces of the United States.

Penalties for a violation are a 4th degree misdemeanor with a penalty of 30 days imprisonment and/or a \$250 fine. A subsequent violation will be classified as a 3rd degree misdemeanor carrying a penalty of 60 days imprisonment and/or a \$500 fine.

The Tobacco 21 law was passed after a recent report by the Ohio State University College of Public Health indicated that raising the minimum age to buy and sell cigarettes and other tobacco products to twenty-one would save lives by preventing adolescents and young adults from ever taking up smoking. Nearly all adult smokers began smoking by the age of eighteen and almost no one starts smoking after twenty-one.

For more information, visit clevelandhealth.org and search for "tobacco laws."