May 21, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tim Kaine
U.S. Senator
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators McConnell and Kaine:

On behalf of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), I am pleased to endorse the “Tobacco-Free Youth Act” (S. 1541). Thank you for introducing this important legislation which would raise the purchasing age from 18 to 21 for tobacco products, electronic cigarettes, and alternative nicotine products nationwide.

ASCO is the national organization representing more than 45,000 physicians and other health care professionals specializing in cancer treatment, diagnosis, and prevention. We are committed to policies that will contribute to the reduction of tobacco use, which will in turn prevent some cancers and other smoking-related diseases. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), if smoking continues at the current rate among youth in this country, 5.6 million of today’s Americans younger than 18 will die early from a smoking-related disease (Youth & Tobacco Use, CDC, 2018). Although the United States has witnessed a decline in cigarette use, the use of other tobacco products is on the rise. Furthermore, the rate of reduction in youth tobacco use is slowing, despite intense public education and policy efforts to curb youth tobacco use.

That said, we have been encouraged by the growing support to enact a strong, bipartisan bill that would raise the federal age of sale for tobacco products to 21, and we commend you for your leadership on this issue. This is one, among several, important federal policy changes needed to address the public health crisis of tobacco use in the United States.

We look forward to working with you to pass this critical legislation as written. If you have questions on any issue involving the care of individuals with cancer or would like to be directed to ASCO’s thoughts on other access issues that affect patients with cancer, please contact Kristin Palmer at Kristin.Palmer@asco.org.

Sincerely,

Monica M. Bertagnolli, MD, FACS, FASCO
President, American Society of Clinical Oncology