WA Governor Jay Inslee Signs Tobacco 21 Bill with SCCA Leaders

SEATTLE – (April 10, 2019) – Washington State Governor Jay Inslee, joined by Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson, signed the Tobacco 21 Bill into law on Friday with Seattle Cancer Care Alliance (SCCA) leaders, founding partners, and members of the community present. SCCA doctors including David K. Madtes, MD, and Keith D. Eaton, MD joined with the American Cancer Society, SCCA public affairs leaders and elected officials to lend support for the bill being signed into law.

“Seattle Cancer Care Alliance doctors and their teams are committed to preventing lung cancer and supporting the future health of Washington State’s young people,” said Nancy Davidson, MD, president and executive director of SCCA. “We are honored to join Governor Inslee, Attorney General and ten other states to drive the success of Tobacco 21.”

According to the American Cancer Society, more than 228,000 new cases of lung cancer are anticipated to be diagnosed in 2019, with close to 77,000 deaths occurring from the disease. Tobacco 21 is a national campaign taking a local approach to raising the tobacco sales age from 18 to 21 years of age in order to reduce and prevent lung cancer. Established in 1996, Tobacco 21 and the Preventing Tobacco Addiction Foundation strive to reduce smoking and tobacco use through a preventive effort locally and on the state level all over the United States and American territories such as Guam.

Nine states – Arkansas, California, Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon, Utah and Virginia – have raised the tobacco age to 21, along with at least 450 localities, including New York City, Chicago, San Antonio, Boston, Cleveland, Minneapolis, both Kansas Cities, and Washington, D.C. Some of the localities are in the states that subsequently enacted statewide laws. Washington, followed by Illinois are the most recent states to adopt Tobacco 21 into law.

**Why 21?**
The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention’s National Youth Tobacco Survey reports that in 2014 overall use of tobacco among youth rose, exposing dangerous new trends, including vaping and the use of e-cigarettes. National data show that about 95 percent of adult smokers begin smoking before they turn 21. Age 21 reduces initiation in younger kids and inhibits consolidation of addiction in older teens.
According to an Institute of Medicine report, raising the legal age for tobacco will reduce how many young people become tobacco users, lower the rate of related cancers and lower healthcare costs. Specifically, the report predicts that raising the minimum age for the sale of tobacco products to 21 will, over time, reduce the smoking rate by about 12 percent and smoking-related deaths by 10 percent.

Seattle Cancer Care Alliance and its partners have supported the passage of Tobacco 21 from the beginning of the legislative process. Seattle Cancer Care Alliance offers a Lung Cancer Screening Program aimed at long-time smokers to support the earlier detection of lung cancer. Additionally, SCCA offers the Lung Cancer Early Detection and Prevention Clinic, which is dedicated to diagnosing lung cancer early and reducing people’s risk for developing the disease.

All of these reflect SCCA’s commitment to preventing, diagnosing and treating cancer, as well as their reasons for supporting and helping to drive the passage of Tobacco 21 in Washington state.

“Tobacco 21 is a common sense approach that allows our state support the future health of our state’s young Washingtonians,” said Keith D. Eaton, MD, medical oncologist who treats lung cancer patients at Seattle Cancer Care Alliance. “We’re truly honored to support this legislation and saving future lives throughout our region.”

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About Seattle Cancer Care Alliance
Seattle Cancer Care Alliance brings together the leading research teams and cancer specialists from Fred Hutch, Seattle Children’s and UW Medicine — one extraordinary group whose sole purpose is the pursuit of better, longer, richer lives for our patients. Based in Seattle’s South Lake Union neighborhood, SCCA has eight clinical care sites, including a medical oncology clinic at EvergreenHealth in Kirkland, Washington; medical and radiation oncology clinics at UW Medicine/Northwest Hospital & Medical Center in Seattle, Washington, radiation oncology services at SCCA Peninsula and medical oncology services at SCCA Issaquah, as well as Network affiliations with hospitals in five states. For more information about SCCA, visit seattlecca.org.