**T21 and 2022 Synar Survey Results: Local Template Press Release**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE**

**CONTACT:**

**Wisconsin Underage Tobacco, Vape Sales Remained Very High in 2022**

*Age 21 Tobacco Campaign, More Retailer Outreach Will Help*

**(CITY, WI)** –Underage tobacco sales remain very high in Wisconsin according to the 2022 Synar Survey, an annual statewide assessment. In 2022, the rate at which retailers sold tobacco products to underage customers was 11.9%, more than double the pre-pandemic rate of 5.5%. The 2022 rate fell slightly from 14.1% in 2021, the highest rate in over a decade.

This is disappointing news for members of **ALLIANCE/AGENCY NAME**, an organization that works to prevent young people from starting and becoming addicted to tobacco products, including e-cigarettes. “There are a number of factors that may have contributed to this big increase in underage sales,” said **CONTACT NAME** of **ALLIANCE/AGENCY NAME**. They include:

* The federal government increased the legal tobacco sales age from 18 to 21 in late 2019. Wisconsin state legislators have not yet changed the state law to match the federal law. This causes confusion and makes local enforcement difficult.
* Retailers need more outreach and education so they understand they must follow the age 21 federal law.
* The statewide retailer inspection program was interrupted due to the pandemic. Underage tobacco sales rose steeply during that time.

**CONTACT NAME** is hopeful that renewed education and outreach will decrease underage tobacco sales once again. First, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) launched a public education campaign in January with one simple message: 21 means 21, no matter what, and it’s illegal to sell tobacco and vape products to anyone under 21. Wisconsin Wins, the proven statewide tobacco retailer education and inspection program, is also returning to pre-pandemic levels.

**SHARE EXAMPLES OF HOW ALLIANCE/AGENCY HELPS RETAILERS PREVENT UNDERAGE TOBACCO SALES, INCLUDING: STEERING THEM TO *WITOBACCOCHECK.ORG* TO COMPLETE RETAILER TRAINING; OFFERING SIGNAGE AND OTHER RESOURCES ABOUT THE AGE 21 LAW, ANSWERING THEIR QUESTIONS.**

“For every year we can prevent a young person from starting to use tobacco, we decrease the chance they will ever start, let alone start a lifelong addiction,” said **CONTACT NAME.** “Preventing underage tobacco sales saves lives.”

For more on tobacco prevention and control efforts in **COUNTY/COMMUNITY NAME**, visit the **ALLIANCE NAME** at **URL, SOCIAL MEDIA, etc.** ###