MINIMUM AGE TO PURCHASE A FIREARM

Minimum age to purchase legislation raises the age for which individuals can purchase a firearm from a licensed dealer from 18 to 21

Youth Aged 18 to 20 Are at Heightened Risk for Firearm Violence

- Well-established research indicates that the brain is not fully developed at age 18, particularly in the areas of risk assessment, decision making, and impulsivity.¹
- According to 2016 FBI arrest data, youth aged 18 to 20 perpetrate a disproportionate percentage of overall homicides (16%) and violent crime (10%).²
- A survey of youth with firearm convictions from thirteen states found that nearly a quarter of these individuals would have been prohibited from owning a firearm if the minimum age for possessing a firearm was 21.³
- Researchers find that the association between firearm availability and suicide is strongest among adolescents and young adults.⁴
- Access to firearms increases the risk of suicide; having a gun in the home increases suicide risk by 3-fold.⁵
- Evidence suggests that lives can be saved by restricting easy access to firearms.⁶

Firearm Fatalities in Virginia

- Over the last decade (2008-2017) 533 youth aged 18 to 20 died by firearms in Virginia; 327 were murdered and 184 died by suicide.⁷
- Nearly one in five adults arrested for homicide in Virginia in 2017 were 18 to 20.⁸
- Over half of individuals 18 to 20 who died by suicide in Virginia in the last decade used a firearm.⁹

Bottom Line:

Youth aged 18 to 20 are at increased risk for firearm violence. Minimum age to purchase legislation will help reduce suicides and homicides among these youth by raising the firearm purchasing age from 18 to 21.