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**Speaker Quinn and Council Members Propose Strong Action
To Further Reduce Smoking in New York City**

**Statement of Susan M. Liss
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WASHINGTON, DC – New York City has led the nation and the world in fighting tobacco use, the number one cause of preventable death. City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and Council members today have taken an important step to build on this progress by proposing legislation that prohibits the sale of tobacco products to anyone under the age of 21.

Nearly all smokers start as kids or young adults, so curtailing smoking among these age groups is critical to winning the fight against tobacco and reducing the deaths, disease and health care costs it causes. This proposal will help achieve these goals and make New York City the first major city or state in the nation to have a minimum tobacco purchase age of 21. It will also help protect young people who have been heavily targeted by the tobacco industry. The U.S. Surgeon General has found that nearly 9 out of 10 smokers started smoking by age 18, and 99 percent started by age 26. Progression from occasional to daily smoking almost always occurs by young adulthood.

This proposal builds on the unprecedented progress New York City has made in reducing smoking with a comprehensive strategy that includes high tobacco taxes, a smoke-free law that applies to all workplaces and public places, and frequent, hard-hitting media campaigns. As a result, New York has reduced smoking far faster and to far lower levels than the nation as a whole. But 14.8 percent of New York adults and 8.5 percent of the city's high school students still smoke. The tobacco industry never lets up in pushing its deadly products. New York City's leaders rightly recognize that they can't let up in their efforts to reduce smoking and save lives.