



May 16, 2019

The Honorable Frank Pallone
 Chairman, House Energy and Commerce Committee
 U.S. House of Representatives
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Donna Shalala
 Member of Congress
 U.S. House of Representatives
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Representative Shalala:

We are writing to express our strong support for H.R. 2339, the Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act of 2019. Your legislation will address the current youth e-cigarette epidemic that is threatening to undermine the progress that has been made in reducing youth cigarette use and also reduce youth use of other tobacco products. Your bill's comprehensive approach to reducing tobacco use will protect public health and save lives.

The bill's prohibition on flavored tobacco products that appeal to kids, including flavored e-cigarettes, flavored cigars and menthol cigarettes, is especially critical to stop tobacco companies from continuing to target and addict kids with enticing flavors. Youth use of e-cigarettes spiked in 2018, increasing by 78 percent among high school students and 48 percent among middle school students in just one year. In 2018, more than 3.6 million middle and high school students were e-cigarette users. The FDA and the US Surgeon General have both called

this alarming rise in youth e-cigarette use an “epidemic”. It is clear that flavors, including kid-friendly flavors like gummy bear and cotton candy, play a significant role in attracting youth to these products. Ninety-seven percent of youth e-cigarette users report using a flavored e-cigarette in the last month.

Your proposed action to prohibit menthol cigarettes is critically important. Menthol cools and numbs the throat and reduces the harshness of tobacco, making it easier and more appealing for youth to start smoking. Over half of youth smokers – and seven in ten African American youth smokers – smoke menthol cigarettes. Eighty-five percent of all African American smokers smoke menthol cigarettes, which is the result of decades of pervasive tobacco industry marketing targeting the African American community. A 2013 FDA analysis concluded that menthol cigarettes increase youth initiation, increase nicotine addiction, and make it harder for smokers to quit.

In addition to public health concerns about e-cigarettes and menthol cigarettes, over one million high school students smoke cigars. High school boys smoke cigars at approximately the same rate as cigarettes, and African American high school students smoke cigars at nearly three times the rate of cigarettes. Cigars are available in a wide variety of flavors that are attractive to kids and flavored cigars make up more than half of the cigar market.

Your bill’s prohibition on the sale of tobacco products to individuals under the age of 21 would further reduce youth tobacco use. Increasing the tobacco sale age to 21 would help keep tobacco products out of high schools where many younger teens often obtain tobacco products from older students. About 95 percent of adult smokers start before age 21. Young people who do not begin smoking by their early 20s are unlikely to ever start.

Further, your prohibition on online sales of tobacco products would shut off an easy way for kids to buy e-cigarettes and other tobacco products online. Studies have shown that many tobacco products are sold online with limited or no age verification requirements. Enforcement of state and local tobacco laws, including tobacco taxes, is made more difficult with online sales.

Finally, we also support the provisions in your bill that would extend the marketing restrictions that the FDA currently applies to cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products to all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and cigars. These include much needed prohibitions on brand-name sponsorships of sports, music or other events.

Our organizations applaud your leadership in introducing this comprehensive legislation, and we look forward to working with you to advance this bill.

Sincerely,

Academy of General Dentistry
Action on Smoking & Health
Allergy & Asthma Network
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Oral and
Maxillofacial Pathology
American Academy of Otolaryngology—
Head and Neck Surgery
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Dental
Research
American Association for Respiratory
Care
American Cancer Society Cancer Action
Network
American College of Cardiology
American College of Physicians
American College of Preventive
Medicine
American Dental Association
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American School Health Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
American Thoracic Society
Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights
Asian Pacific Partners for
Empowerment, Advocacy and
Leadership (APPEAL)
Association of Maternal & Child Health
Programs
Association of Schools and Programs of
Public Health

Association of State and Territorial
Health Officials
Big Cities Health Coalition
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Cancer Prevention and Treatment Fund
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of
America
COPD Foundation
Counter Tools
Eta Sigma Gamma – National Health
Education Honorary
March of Dimes
National African American Tobacco
Prevention Network
National Association of County and City
Health Officials
National Association of Pediatric Nurse
Practitioners
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of Social Workers
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Medical Association
National Network of Public Health
Institutes
Oncology Nursing Society
Prevention Institute
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography
and Interventions
Society for Public Health Education
Students Against Destructive Decisions
The Society of State Leaders of Health
and Physical Education
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons
Trinity Health
Trust for America's Health