



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