

October 18, 2019

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

On behalf of the more than 590,000 physicians and medical students represented by the combined memberships of the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American College of Physicians, the American Osteopathic Association, and the American Psychiatric Association, we write to applaud your decision to remove flavored e-cigarettes, including mint and menthol, from the market. When this policy comes to fruition, it will represent the most significant action the federal government has taken to date on e-cigarettes and has the potential to reverse current epidemic-levels of youth e-cigarette use.

While the United States has made enormous progress in reducing tobacco use in recent decades, the alarming rise in popularity of e-cigarettes, including JUUL, has sent youth use of tobacco products soaring. Preliminary data from the federal government's National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) show that more than a quarter of high school students are current e-cigarette users. This reflects an increase of nearly a third over the last year and an increase of 135 percent since 2017. This trend threatens to undermine this progress and expose a new generation of Americans to the death and disease associated with tobacco use.

Despite marketing from tobacco companies designed to convince consumers otherwise, no e-cigarette products have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for smoking cessation. As products designed to deliver high levels of nicotine to users quickly, e-cigarettes are a danger to adolescents, particularly as manufacturers continue to develop products capable of delivering ever higher levels of nicotine while maintaining their palatability. Data also show that adolescents who use e-cigarettes are more likely to begin use of traditional cigarettes, exposing them to the attendant health harms associated with their use.

Beyond the harms posed by nicotine, the recent outbreak of vaping-related lung illness demonstrate that e-cigarettes can have grave short-term health consequences. To date, this illness has sickened over 500 adults and adolescents and caused nine deaths. While the cause of this acute illness has not yet been confirmed, it is known that e-cigarettes emit an aerosol of ultrafine particles that can include heavy metals, volatile organic compounds, and carcinogens rather than the harmless water vapor the term vaping calls to mind. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has also publicly warned about increasing reports of seizures resulting from e-cigarette use.

The evidence is clear: while the nicotine in these products sustains use over time, the availability of flavors attracts young users to begin in the first place. Young people consistently report that they begin using these products because they come in flavors they like, and the vast majority of adolescents and young adults who use e-cigarettes reported use of a flavored product. These child-appealing flavors must be removed from the market without delay.

We urge your Administration to issue and implement the final Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidance policy that would take all flavored products, including mint and menthol, off the market. Swift action will be critical to protecting our youth. America's physicians stand ready to work with your Administration to protect young people from harmful e-cigarette products.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Physicians
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association

CC: Alex M. Azar, JD, Secretary of Health and Human Services
Norman E. Sharpless, MD, Acting Commissioner of Food and Drugs