

Sept. 12, 2019

Dear Chairman Hall and members of the Committee,

Last week, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer issued executive orders to better regulate e-cigarettes and declare youth vaping a public health emergency with the support of the Michigan Health & Hospital Association. Our member hospitals have been asked by schools to specifically focus on prevention of e-cigarette use as they develop their community health priorities, and we believe that these executive orders will support those prevention efforts as well as help current users quit.

As a mission-driven organization whose focus is on advancing the health of individuals and communities, we applaud Gov. Whitmer's efforts to prevent youth addiction, and look forward to continuing to partner with the state to improve the well-being of our residents.

A recent outbreak of more than 450 cases of lung illness and six deaths associated with the use of e-cigarettes highlights just how little we know about the long-term effects of vaping devices despite their skyrocketing prevalence. Underscoring the seriousness of this issue, the Food and Drug Administration announced yesterday that it is developing a nationwide ban of flavored e-cigarettes to combat this growing health concern. E-cigarette usage among high-schoolers rose 78% in 2018, and one out of every five high school students reported to have used e-cigarettes that year. This is particularly dangerous for growing brains, as exposure to nicotine before the age of 25 can significantly harm a student's learning, memory and attention.

Further, 97% of current youth e-cigarette users used a flavored product in the last month, and 70% cite flavors as a key reason for their use. Flavors designed to taste like sweets, cereals and gum are being marketed to adolescents as safe options despite growing evidence of the contrary. For example, in 2016 the U.S. Office of the Surgeon General found that e-cigarette aerosols can contain heavy metals and toxic organic compounds such as lead and formaldehyde. The MHA believes that curbing the sale of flavored vapor products and banning misleading marketing will help prevent some children from picking up these addictive devices in the first place.

The MHA would like to thank Chairman Hall and members of the committee for taking our thoughts into consideration, and again encourage continued action on preventing e-cigarette use among adolescents.

Sincerely,



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*Brian Peters, Chief Executive Officer*