

NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health
February 3, 2020

The Honorable Diana DeGette
Chairwoman, Energy and Commerce
Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman, Energy and Commerce Committee
2107 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Ranking Member, Energy and Commerce
Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee
2434 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member, Energy and Commerce
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeGette, Chairman Pallone, Representative Guthrie and Representative Walden:

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) represents the nation's nearly 3,000 local health departments across the country, who are responsible for safeguarding the health of all Americans. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments are on the front lines of the youth vaping epidemic, educating members of their communities about the dangers of e-cigarettes and tobacco use. As part of your ongoing effort to address the youth vaping epidemic, I wanted to make you aware of the critical role of local health departments in preventing youth from picking up the habit, ensuring local retailers are compliant with current tobacco laws and developing cessation programs to help people quit.

The alarming rise in e-cigarette use among youth calls for immediate federal action from the Congress. NACCHO supports action the Energy and Commerce Committee has already taken by passing the *Reversing the Youth Vaping Epidemic Act* (H.R. 2339) that would prohibit online sales, ban all flavored e-cigarettes, and protect kids from the marketing of tobacco products. This action is needed to protect youth across the country, who have been left out of the administration's final e-cigarette guidance that will do little to curb the current youth vaping epidemic. NACCHO urges a more robust guidance to include prohibiting open-tank and disposable e-cigarettes from continuing to offer flavor-based e-liquids, including menthol, which has historically been used to target communities of color. Reports show that flavorings in e-cigarettes are a main contributor to the rise and appeal of vaping in our youth and that action must be taken to address all retailers and flavors.

Local health departments are key partners with the healthcare system and non-governmental organizations to protect the health and well-being of their community and are instrumental in ensuring public awareness about the dangers of tobacco use, including e-cigarettes, particularly among youth. For example, NACCHO's recently released report, [Tobacco Control Efforts in Rural America: Perspectives from Local Health Departments](#), found that nearly all respondents (90%) reported engaging in tobacco and cessation activities and initiatives in the community, including education, referrals to Quitlines, social marketing campaigns, and cessation support groups. This same study highlighted the particular challenge of e-cigarette use to their regions, with 93% of respondents noting that e-cigarettes were a threat in their communities. These numbers reinforce what we are hearing from health departments of all sizes across the country: youth e-cigarette use is a big problem that is getting bigger.

Congress can support other policy approaches by encouraging the industry to take actions on its own to curb the youth vaping epidemic, such as banning flavors and strengthening online age verification or



banning all non-face-to-face sales. Moreover, more education is needed at the local level to inform parents and children about the dangers of nicotine on the developing brain and damage caused to the lungs by inhalation of dangerous, highly addictive substances. We also need to ensure that there are programs and services available to help youth who are addicted to these products to quit—something that is receiving far too little public attention. NACCHO calls on Congress to do all it can to reduce the availability, appeal, and use of e-cigarettes among youth to protect them from the dangers of nicotine and vaping by supporting efforts to remove enticing flavored e-cigarettes from the marketplace immediately.

NACCHO looks forward to continuing to work with Congress to address the impact of the youth vaping epidemic. Please contact Eli Briggs, NACCHO Senior Director of Government Affairs, at ebriggs@naccho.org should you have any questions or wish to discuss further.

Sincerely,



Lori Tremmel Freeman, MBA
Chief Executive Officer