



**Statement by CVS Health
Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “Legislation to Reverse the Youth Tobacco Epidemic”
October 16, 2019**

As the nation’s first and only national retail pharmacy chain to have eliminated the sale of cigarettes and other harmful tobacco products from its retail stores, CVS Health applauds the subcommittee for holding today’s hearing on legislation to address the sharp rise in use of nicotine products, particularly among young people. H.R. 2339, *The Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act of 2019* introduced by Chairman Pallone (D-NJ) and Congresswoman Donna Shalala (D-FL), represents another step forward in efforts to curtail the use of tobacco, e-cigarettes, and flavored nicotine products. CVS Health supports this legislation to meaningfully reduce youth tobacco use and improve health outcomes.

While the adult smoking rate in the U.S. has been on the decline for the first time in a generation, youth tobacco use has increased – a trend believed to be the result of the rapid and dramatic rise in e-cigarette use. The dangers of these products to our youth and the marketing campaigns that target them are very troubling. We commend Chairman Pallone and the more than 65 co-sponsors of this legislation for their leadership and for underscoring the urgency of this matter. Congressional action and the strides made to date by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration will help reduce the number of people that are exposed to tobacco and other harmful nicotine products, which, in turn, will reduce the prevalence of tobacco-related diseases including lung cancer, heart disease and stroke and make a significant impact on the health of our next generation.

Public and private partnerships are critical to the success of this public health intervention. As part of our five-year, \$50 million *Be The First* initiative to help create the first tobacco-free generation, CVS Health has launched an aggressive effort to combat the epidemic of vaping among young adults. This effort provides a total of \$12 million for educational materials and tools to prevent smoking and vaping in conjunction with partners such as American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Medical Association, the National Association of School Nurses, Discovery Education, the CATCH Global Foundation, and the Truth Initiative.

In support of public policy reinforcing these tobacco-free goals, we also recently wrote to our nation’s governors asking that they take action to discourage the sale of harmful tobacco products in pharmacies and encourage smoking cessation programs, as they are licensed in their communities as health care providers.

In 2020, we plan to expand our tobacco-cessation efforts, especially within the Medicaid population where smoking rates are considerably higher than among all adults. More than a quarter (25.3) of all Medicaid enrollees smoke compared to 11.8 percent of people enrolled in private insurance, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A recent study by University of California San Francisco also found that reducing smoking and its associated health effects among Medicaid recipients in each state by just one percent would save the Medicaid program an estimated \$2.6 billion within one year.

CVS Health is committed to doing all we can to help reduce youth smoking rates. We believe far too many young people are using harmful tobacco and nicotine products, particularly e-cigarettes and vapes that facilitate initiation of tobacco use. We thank the Committee's leadership for holding today's hearing and urge swift passage and enactment of this legislation.