



## Press Release

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### **New Lung Association Report: Ending Tobacco Use in California Critical to Saving Lives, Especially during Pandemic**

*The Lung Association calls on local elected officials to ensure the sale of flavored tobacco products is prohibited in 2021 to end tobacco use, youth vaping and save lives*

SACRAMENTO, CA – Even amid the pandemic, tobacco use remains a serious public health threat. In addition to tobacco-related death and disease, smoking also increases the risk of the most severe impacts of COVID-19, making ending tobacco use more important than ever. This year’s “State of Tobacco Control: California Grades” report from the American Lung Association grades city and county efforts to reduce tobacco use and calls for meaningful policies that will prevent and reduce tobacco use and save lives. The report finds that California had mixed grades on its efforts to reduce and prevent tobacco use, including e-cigarettes.

Tobacco use remains the nation’s leading cause of preventable death and disease, taking an estimated 480,000 lives every year. Much like COVID-19, tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure disproportionately impacts certain communities, including communities of color, LGBTQ+ Americans and persons of lower income. To address this critical public health threat, “State of Tobacco Control” provides an in-depth description of our grading methodology which encourages policies needed to prevent and reduce tobacco use.

This year’s 19<sup>th</sup> annual report finds that in 2021 local jurisdictions in California have the opportunity to take action and restrict the sale of flavored tobacco products in order to support public health and save lives in 2020. The need for California to take action to protect youth from all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, is more urgent than ever, with the youth vaping epidemic continuing. With 1 in 5 teens vaping, our children are becoming the next generation addicted to tobacco. Youth vaping and tobacco use overall is largely driven by flavored tobacco products, and our 19<sup>th</sup> annual report has added a new state grade calling for policies to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, flavored e-cigarettes and flavored cigars.

“In California, our high school tobacco use rate is 12.7%. The surge in youth vaping combined with the fact that smoking increases the chance of severe COVID-19 symptoms, make it more important than ever for California to implement the proven measures outlined in ‘State of Tobacco Control’ to prevent and reduce tobacco use,” said American Lung Association Advocacy Director, Erica Costa.

The 19<sup>th</sup> annual “State of Tobacco Control” report grades policies proven to prevent and reduce tobacco use, and finds that while California has taken significant steps to reduce tobacco use, elected officials can do more



to save lives and ensure all California residents benefit from reductions in tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke. This is especially the case during the pandemic.

In 2019, about 8,000 kids began vaping every day – typically with flavored e-cigarettes – setting them up for a lifetime of addiction to nicotine. Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products, including menthol, will not only help end youth vaping, but will also help address the disproportionate impact of tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke on Black and Brown communities. [Menthol cigarettes](#) remain a key vector for tobacco-related death and disease in Black communities, with nearly 85% of Black Americans who smoke using them. “Kids follow the flavors and ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products in California is key to ending the youth e-cigarette epidemic and youth tobacco use overall. We call on legislators in Sacramento to prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol across the Golden State”, said Costa.

This report provides an important roadmap on how we can put in place the policies proven to have the greatest impact on reducing tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke. Because of COVID-19, we are all thinking more about lung health. Now is the time for lawmakers in California to act and take this opportunity to achieve lasting reductions in tobacco-related death and disease,” said Costa.

For media interested in speaking with an expert about the [“State of Tobacco Control”](#) report, lung health, tobacco use and tobacco control policies, contact the American Lung Association at [Erica.Costa@lung.org](mailto:Erica.Costa@lung.org) or (916) 585-7677.

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### **About the American Lung Association**

The American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease, through research, education and advocacy. The work of the American Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer; to improve the air we breathe; to reduce the burden of lung disease on individuals and their families; and to eliminate tobacco use and tobacco-related diseases. For more information about the American Lung Association, a holder of the coveted 4-star rating from Charity Navigator and a Gold-Level GuideStar Member, or to support the work it does, call 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-586-4872) or visit: [Lung.org](http://Lung.org).

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