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California Communities Paving the Path to End Flavored Tobacco in American Lung Association's Annual State of Tobacco Control Report

Lung Association calls on state officials to continue local momentum and pass legislation to restrict the sale of flavored tobacco products statewide, protecting youth and saving lives

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA [January 29, 2020] – According to the newly released American Lung Association State of Tobacco Control 2020 report, tobacco use remains the nation's leading cause of preventable death and disease, ending an estimated 480,000 lives every year. This year's report finds that while California receives solid grades in many areas, a disturbing trend is threatening the health of the state's young people as youth e-cigarette use has taken a deadly upward turn. The American Lung Association urges state and local officials to pass restrictions on the sale of all flavored tobacco products to support public health and save lives.

The need for California to take action aimed at protecting youth from all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, is more urgent than ever. Youth vaping prevalence is rising at an alarming rate, with more than one in four high school students reporting they vape. This is a staggering 135% increase in high school e-cigarette use in just the past two years, which translates to nearly three million more kids starting to vape in that time period, setting them up for a lifetime of addiction.

"In California, our adult smoking rate remains at 11.2%. Sadly, with the youth vaping epidemic still rising, we may be squandering an opportunity to make the current generation of kids the first tobacco-free generation," said Erica Costa, Director of Advocacy for the American Lung Association in California. "Tobacco use is a serious addiction, and as such, California needs to implement measures proven to prevent and reduce tobacco use as outlined in the 'State of Tobacco Control' report."

The 18th annual "State of Tobacco Control" report grades state and federal governments on policies proven to prevent and reduce tobacco use. It finds that California is among the top states in the nation in several key areas. Still, maintenance and further improvement hinge on the continued efforts of state, county and local officials to enact strict measures to prevent youth smoking, e-cigarette use and implement multi-unit housing protections.

California's 2019 Grades

- Smokefree Air Policies - Grade A
- Funding for State Tobacco Prevention Programs – Grade A
- Level of State Tobacco Taxes - Grade B
- Coverage and Access to Services to Quit Tobacco - Grade B
- Minimum Age of Sale for Tobacco Products to 21 – Grade B

In conjunction with the national report, the American Lung Association in California released its companion ***State of Tobacco Control 2020 – California Local Grades*** report, which issues grades for all 482 cities and 58 counties in California on local tobacco control policies.

Highlights from this year's report include:

- California now has a total of 44 communities with an overall A grade
- Thirty-four communities restricted the sale of flavored tobacco products, doubling the number of policies to 63
- Over half of the policies passed in 2019 updated definitions of smoking or tobacco products to include e-cigarettes

Local jurisdictions statewide have indicated the desire for stronger tobacco control by implementing more comprehensive public policies. The American Lung Association encourages the state of California to match these strides taken at the local level, as outlined in the State of Tobacco Control report. In particular, this year's report noted the need to focus on statewide policies that raise tobacco taxes and place restrictions on flavored tobacco products.

One of the most effective ways to reduce tobacco use, especially among youth populations, is to significantly increase the tax on all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes. Multiple studies have shown that every 10 percent increase in the price of cigarettes reduces consumption by about four percent among adults and about seven percent among youth.

“To protect kids from a lifetime of nicotine addiction, the American Lung Association in California encourages the state to raise and equalize the taxes placed on cigarettes and tobacco products—including e-cigarettes. These steps are critical to California, where 10.9% of high school students use e-cigarettes,” said American Lung Association National Director of Public Policy, Thomas Carr.

To further improve the health and safety of all Californians, continued aggressive policies must be taken at the state and local levels, including the passage of CA SB 793, to restrict flavored e-cigarettes and all other flavored tobacco products that are created specifically to appeal to youth. Massachusetts took that historic step by prohibiting the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, in November 2019, becoming the first such state to do so. The Lung Association urges more states to follow Massachusetts' lead and pass comprehensive laws eliminating flavored tobacco products in 2020.

“Restricting the sale of flavored tobacco would take aim directly at the scourge of youth smoking and help to establish the first tobacco-free generation in our history. By taking the right steps, we can prevent the projected 400,000 youth in California from prematurely losing their lives due to smoking related diseases,” said American Lung Association in California Advocacy Director, Erica Costa.

The question remains, will 2020 be the year that public health is prioritized over tobacco product manufacturers so that another generation is spared addiction to dangerous tobacco products? As the result of successful lawsuits filed by the American Lung Association and several public health partners, FDA will be required to take several important and long overdue actions to protect the public health from tobacco products in 2020. These include finalizing graphic warning labels on all cigarette packs by March 15, and requiring all e-cigarette, and most cigar, hookah, pipe and other manufacturers of deemed products to submit applications to the FDA by May 12, 2020 to remain on the market in the U.S.

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 Bo.Smith@Lung.org or 310-359-6386.

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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.

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