



October 18, 2019

The Honorable Alex M. Azar, II
Secretary U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

On behalf of the 6.13 million children in the United States currently living with asthma and their families, the Childhood Asthma Leadership Coalition (CALC) would like to thank you for your leadership in addressing the public health crisis created by e-cigarettes and vaping. CALC members are leading advocates and experts in childhood asthma, public health, and health care who collectively work to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of the over six million American children with asthma. Specifically, we believe that HHS's announcement that the Administration will remove all non-tobacco flavored e-cigarettes from the market is a step in the right direction towards ending the vaping epidemic and protecting children from exposure to these deadly toxins.

As the single most common chronic condition among children in the country and the third leading cause of hospitalizations among children under the age 17, asthma is a serious health condition. Although supporters of e-cigarettes claim that these devices produce fewer tobacco irritants than traditional cigarettes, research shows that the use of e-cigarettes are similarly associated with difficulty breathing and lung damage.¹ These irritants pose a particularly dangerous risk to children currently living with or at risk of developing asthma. Exposure to these irritants can trigger asthma symptoms, including life-threatening asthma attacks.

With over five million adolescents reporting recent e-cigarette use, driven by attractive flavors like mango and cappuccino, nicotine use and addiction are unfortunately becoming commonplace.² According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), 66 percent of teens believe that e-cigarettes only contain flavoring, while an additional 13.7 percent do not know what is in their e-cigarettes because manufacturers are not required to post ingredients.³ In reality, vaping "juice" almost always contains nicotine, as well as ultrafine particles, volatile organic compounds, and heavy metals such as nickel and lead.⁴ These manipulative marketing practices contribute to minors' addiction to e-cigarettes and to inhaling these harmful substances.

¹ Lappas, A.S., Tzortzi, A.S., Konstantinidi, E.M., Teloniatis, S.I., Tzavara, C.K., Gennimata, S.A., Koulouris, N.G. and Behrakis, P.K. Short-term respiratory effects of e-cigarettes in healthy individuals and smokers with asthma. *Respirology*, 23: 291– 297., doi: [10.1111/resp.13180](https://doi.org/10.1111/resp.13180). 2017.

² Vital Signs. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/youth-tobacco-use/index.html>. Feb 2019.

³ Teens and e-cigarettes. National Institute on Drug Abuse. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/infographics/teens-e-cigarettes>. Feb 2016.

⁴ *Id.*

CALC urges the Administration to move forward with urgency. CDC has announced that almost 1300 cases of severe respiratory illnesses and multiple deaths attributed to vaping have been reported. Research suggests that nicotine exposure also has deleterious effects on fetal and childhood lung development.⁵ Therefore, combating this epidemic immediately is essential to avoiding serious long-term and multi-generational health consequences.

Our children deserve healthy environments free from exposure to tobacco products that make it difficult to breathe. Thank you for your leadership and work to end this epidemic. We look forward to working with the Administration to further efforts that ensure healthy futures for our children.

Sincerely,

Advocacy Council of ACAAI
Allergy & Asthma Network
American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI)
American Lung Association
Association of Asthma Educators
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Children's National Hospital
Families USA
First Focus Campaign for Children
Health Resources in Action
Healthy Schools Campaign
National Association of School Nurses
Regional Asthma Management & Prevention (RAMP)

⁵ Dai X, Dharmage SC, Lowe AJ, Allen KJ, Thomas PS. Early smoke exposure is associated with asthma and lung function deficits in adolescents. *Journal of Asthma*. 54:6, 662-669, DOI: [10.1080/02770903.2016.1253730](https://doi.org/10.1080/02770903.2016.1253730). 2017.