

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 26, 2019

Doug McMillon
President and Chief Executive Officer
Walmart
702 SW 8th Street
Bentonville, Arkansas 72716

Dear Mr. McMillon:

Tobacco cigarettes are responsible for more than 480,000 deaths nationwide every year and more than five million children are currently using e-cigarettes—which have been linked to 530 cases of serious vaping-related lung disease and eight deaths. Five years ago, CVS Health announced that it would no longer sell any tobacco product in their stores. And, just last week, Walmart announced that its stores would soon stop selling e-cigarette flavors and devices. We write to commend you for this vitally important action—as e-cigarette flavors are clearly designed to appeal and addict children to nicotine—and urge you to take the next step of banning all tobacco products at your stores nationwide.

Earlier this month, the FDA announced that all e-cigarette flavors—including mint and menthol—would soon be banned in the United States, unless or until they can prove that they benefit the public health. This long overdue decision by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) was prompted by preliminary data from the National Youth Tobacco Survey, showing yet another alarming increase in youth use of e-cigarettes.

In 2017, 11 percent of children under the age of 18 were vaping. In 2018, that number skyrocketed to 20 percent. And, in 2019, we now have 27.5 percent of kids using e-cigarettes.—compared with only three percent of adults using these products. Over two years, our nation has seen a 135 percent increase in youth vaping. Today, more than five million kids are frequent users of these addictive products—including ten percent of middle-school students.

We know why children are getting hooked on these products: the kid-friendly flavors that are clearly meant to appeal and addict young people, such as Cool Mint, Unicorn Milk, Citra Zing, Gummy Bear, and Neon Dream. According to the FDA, 81 percent of children who use e-cigarettes report that they started with a flavor. Further, children who vape are three times more likely than their peers to ultimately transition to tobacco cigarettes. These flavors—which have never proven that they are safe or effective at helping adults quit smoking cigarettes—are addicting an entire generation of children to nicotine.

Over the past year, faced with public outcry about youth use, certain e-cigarette manufacturers voluntarily chose to remove only some of their nicotine flavors from retail store shelves. This was clearly not sufficient for addressing the growing public health epidemic of youth vaping, which is why we commend the FDA for finally acting to get all e-cigarette flavors off the market. But more must be done to protect children from a lifetime of nicotine addiction.

We once again thank you for taking the necessary step of banning the sale of e-cigarette flavors and devices at Walmart stores nationwide, but urge you to take the next step in order to help protect the public health. Walmart should immediately stop selling all dangerous and addictive tobacco products at its stores, including tobacco cigarettes.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator