

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 14, 2019

John T. Standley  
Chief Executive Officer  
Rite Aid Corporation  
PO Box 3165  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105

Dear Mr. Pessina,

Exactly five years ago, we wrote to Rite Aid urging that your company—whose mission statement is to “improve the health and wellness of our communities”—stop selling tobacco products. At the time, we noted that doing so would foster the health and wellness of Rite Aid customers and send a critical message to all Americans—and especially children—about the dangers of tobacco use. Unfortunately, your company rejected our request and instead chose to continue selling tobacco products—including illegally to children.

According to new information from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), 9.6 percent of Rite Aid stores nationwide inspected by FDA have been caught selling tobacco products to children since 2010. This is unacceptable. Given that your company is either unwilling or unable to keep tobacco products out of the hands of kids who frequent your stores, we once again write to urge you, as a health care pharmacy, to put children over profits and immediately stop selling dangerous and addictive tobacco products at your stores.

For decades, the United States has been enormously successful at reducing youth tobacco use, including by reducing cigarette smoking among high school students from 28 percent in 2000 to 8 percent in 2018. However, these gains are at risk of being reversed because of newer tobacco products being sold to children in your stores—especially electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) like JUUL and their accompanying kid-friendly flavors (fruit medley, mango, cool cucumber, crème brulee, mint). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), tobacco use among our nation’s children is now increasing. Between 2017 and 2018, use of tobacco products among high school students grew more than 38 percent, with nearly 5 million youth now using a tobacco product. This alarming increase has been driven largely by an increase in e-cigarette use. Over the last year, we saw a 78 percent increase in high-school use of e-cigarettes, and a 48 percent increase in middle-school use of e-cigarettes.

According to your website, Rite Aid is committed to “improving the health and wellness of our communities.” Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, killing more than 480,000 people every year. For the first time in decades, tobacco use among children is increasing. And, according to the FDA, your stores are outliers in selling these dangerous, addictive tobacco products to children. If your company is truly committed to improving the health and wellness of our communities, we strongly encourage you to stop selling tobacco products in your stores.

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