

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 14, 2019

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

Dear Mr. McMillon,

Exactly five years ago today, we wrote to Walmart urging that your company—the number one retailer of cigarettes in the country—stop selling tobacco products. At the time, we noted that doing so would foster the health and wellness of Walmart 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), 17.5 percent of Walmart stores nationwide inspected by FDA have been caught selling tobacco products to children since 2010, making your stores the second largest violators of illegal tobacco product sales to our nation's children. 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 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, Walmart is committed to “using our size and scale for good.” 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 using your size for good, we strongly encourage you to stop selling tobacco products in your stores.

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 communities, helping young people, and fighting cancer, 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