November 27, 2019

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States of America
The White House
Washington, DC  20500

Dear Mr. President:

I was honored to be invited to meet with you at the White House on Friday, November 22, 2019 to discuss the negative impact on health caused by the use of tobacco, nicotine, vaping and electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS). The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) applauds your leadership on the issue and your willingness to engage directly in the formation of policy that will impact the lives and health of millions of people moving forward, especially children.

Mr. President, you have an opportunity to save a generation from addiction by removing all flavored nicotine products from the market and making the sale of vaping and ENDS devices illegal to any person under the age of 21. I and my colleagues urge you to seize this historic opportunity.

As a family physician, I see the negative consequences of addiction in all forms. We must remain mindful that vaping and ENDS devices are delivering nicotine to their users and nicotine is a highly addictive substance. Furthermore, it is essential that we remain aware of the profoundly negative impacts nicotine and tobacco has on an individual’s health and wellbeing. I would add that the availability of flavors is solely designed to attract children and adolescents to these products and addict a generation to nicotine and tobacco products.

The evidence is overwhelming. Flavors play a significant role in getting young people to start and continue using tobacco and nicotine products. Ninety-seven percent of youth who currently use ENDS used a flavored product in the past month, and nearly 64 percent of high school-age ENDS users specifically use mint or menthol flavors. Removing all flavored nicotine products – including mint and menthol – from the market is a critical step in tackling the ENDS epidemic among youth, and one with strong bi-partisan support.
Again, I was honored to participate in this important discussion along with other representatives from physician and patient advocacy organizations. These policy choices can appear difficult in the moment, but I can assure you, Mr. President, that 20 years from now millions of people will be healthier, more productive citizens if you take affirmative action to ban these addictive products. The AAFP and our members stand to assist you in improving the health of our nation, especially when it comes to the health and wellbeing of the nation’s children.

Sincerely,

Gary LeRoy, MD
President

C: The Honorable Alex Azar, Secretary, Department of Health & Human Services