



March 19, 2019

Representative Wasserman Schultz
U.S. House of Representatives
1114 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Blumenthal
U.S. Senate
706 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

**Association of State and
Territorial Health Officials**

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Dear Representative Wasserman Schultz and Senator Blumenthal:

On behalf of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) I am writing in support of your draft bill the *Preventing Opportunities for Teen E-Cigarette and Tobacco Addiction (PROTECT) Act* to address the increased use of electronic cigarette use among middle and high school students.

Electronic cigarette (e-cigarette) use by youth is a growing concern among state and federal policymakers and a public health issue that FDA claims has “hit epidemic proportions.” Despite the potentially harmful health effects, e-cigarettes have increased in popularity due to claims that they are less harmful, more convenient, and more cost effective than regular cigarettes. They are now the most commonly used tobacco products among youth and young adults, with e-cigarette use growing 900 percent among high school students from 2011 to 2015. In 2016, more than two million U.S. middle and high school students had used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Therefore, ASTHO is appreciative of the language included in the proposed legislation that supports surveillance on the use of e-cigarettes and emerging tobacco products by younger populations, identifying effective messaging to youth and other populations who interact and support them as well as developing and implementing an education campaign on the harms associated with these products. Moreover, we appreciate the authorization of funding to state, territorial, tribal and local health departments, and other organizations for prevention activities. We are also thankful that the bill includes efforts that would contribute to evidence-based policies to prevent the initiation of and use of these products.

As you move forward with developing the legislation, please feel free to contact Carolyn McCoy, the senior director of government affairs at cmccoy@astho.org. Thank you for your leadership and we look forward to working with you on this and other public health issues of importance.

Sincerely,

Michael Fraser, PhD MS CAE FCPP
Chief Executive Officer, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials