

American Academy
of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



American
Heart
Association.



April 30, 2020

Christopher Krebs
Director
Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane
Washington, D.C. 20528-0380

Dear Director Krebs:

We write in response to media reports that vape shops are requesting to be included on the Administration's "Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce" advisory list. In light of mounting concerns that smoking and vaping may increase risk of severe complications from COVID-19, it is critical that the Administration reject any requests to include vape and tobacco shops as essential businesses.

The coronavirus attacks the lungs, and behaviors that weaken the lungs and immune system may put individuals at greater risk. Leading public health organizations and experts are cautioning that smokers and e-cigarette users may be at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Dr. Nora Volkow, Director of the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse, recently said that "Because it attacks the lungs, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 could be an especially serious threat to those who smoke tobacco or marijuana or vape." Vape and tobacco shops cannot be considered essential businesses when they are selling products that are addictive and may increase the risk of severe complications from COVID-19.

We are also in the midst of a youth e-cigarette epidemic with over 5.3 million kids using e-cigarettes. Vape and tobacco shops sell e-cigarettes in thousands of kid-friendly flavors like cotton candy and gummy bear. These products were excluded from the Food and Drug Administration's enforcement policy, and therefore still on the market. Flavored products attract kids and have fueled the youth e-cigarette epidemic. 97% of current youth e-cigarette users use flavored e-cigarettes and 70% use e-cigarettes "because they come in flavors I like." Vape shops are selling flavored e-cigarettes to kids. According to the 2018 National Youth Tobacco Survey, 16.5% of middle and high school e-cigarette users report obtaining e-cigarettes from a vape shop in the past month, compared to 9.8% from a gas station or convenience store.

Vape shops have claimed they are essential because they believe adults need access to e-cigarettes so they may quit smoking combustible cigarettes. But public health authorities in the U.S., including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Surgeon General, have not found enough evidence to recommend e-cigarettes, including any flavored e-cigarette, for tobacco cessation. In fact, there is no valid scientific study demonstrating that flavored e-cigarettes are effective at helping smokers quit. The 2020 Surgeon General's Report on Smoking Cessation evaluated the most recent information available and concluded that "there is presently inadequate evidence to conclude that e-cigarettes, in general, increase smoking cessation." In addition, no e-cigarette has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration as safe and effective for tobacco cessation.

E-cigarettes have addicted millions of our kids, have not been proven to help smokers quit and there are concerns that their use could put users at greater risk for serious complications from COVID-19. Given the concerns about the products they sell, vape and tobacco shops cannot be considered essential. We urge you to continue to leave vape and tobacco shops off of any essential business designation for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American Heart Association

American Lung Association

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

Truth Initiative