

***MSMS Statement on Governor Whitmer's
Action to Protect Michigan Children***



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403 WORDS

We have made considerable progress as a nation in curbing cigarette use among our nation's youth. Unfortunately, out of a product that is marketed as a safer alternative to cigarettes for individuals who wish to quit smoking emerges an industry targeting children. While e-cigarettes may be safer for the purpose of cessation, they are anything but. The same concerns surrounding nicotine and other additives that we have long-held with combustible cigarettes are re-surfacing.

As physicians, we know nicotine is a neurotoxin that is particularly harmful to the adolescent, developing brain which impacts learning, memory, and attention. It can also increase risk for future addiction to other drugs. Moreover, the aerosol users inhale and exhale from e-cigarettes can potentially expose users and those around them to heavy metals, volatile organic compounds, and ultrafine particles by way of inhalation through the lungs. What we don't know is what chemicals go into e-cigarettes since there is no associated government regulation and because these devices have been on the market for such a short amount of time, other long-term side effects may emerge. In fact, just recently, there has been widespread reporting of e-cigarette-associated lung illnesses across the country.

The known and unknown health risks of e-cigarettes are alarming enough but we have also witnessed a staggering increase in the use of e-cigarettes among youth since they have entered the market in 2007 – 78 percent between 2017 and 2018. In 2018, more than 3.6 million U.S. youth, including 1 in 5 high school students and 1 in 20 middle school students, were currently use e-cigarettes. That is a public health emergency and we cannot be complacent.

Let us be clear. The Governor's order is strictly related to flavored vaping products – those that are more appealing to young people (and clearly targeting young people). And not only are they more appealing but the chemicals in certain flavors may, themselves, pose health risks. We see no compelling reason kid-friendly flavors would need to be available to adults attempting to wean off cigarettes.

Governor Whitmer is right to declare Michigan children's use of e-cigarettes a public health crisis, with lifelong and devastating consequences. The evidence speaks for itself. The Governor's bold move to ban the sale and misleading marketing of flavored vaping products – products clearly and shamefully targeted at our kids – will prevent nicotine addiction before it starts and make a real difference in the lives of children in Michigan.

The Michigan State Medical Society is a professional association of more than 15,000 Michigan physicians. Its mission is to promote a health care environment which supports physicians in caring for, and enhancing the health of Michigan citizens through science, quality, and ethics in the practice of medicine.