May 12, 2020
The Honorable Jerry Hill
Senator, 13th District
State Capitol, Room 5035
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re.: Senate Bill 793

Dear Senator Hill:

On behalf of the 21 organizations signed on to this letter we are writing to express our support for SB 793, which will help protect youth from the harms of flavored tobacco products.

We are in the midst of an e-cigarette epidemic of unparalleled proportions. Tobacco companies have pushed candy-flavored products into the youth market, quietly hooking kids into a dangerous addiction to nicotine.

Current events have highlighted these dangers. There is growing evidence that smokers are at a greater risk of hospitalization and severe illness due to COVID-19, placing smokers in the high-risk category. Smoking increases the risk for respiratory infections, weakens the immune system and is a major cause of a number of chronic health conditions, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart disease and diabetes. In addition, there is growing evidence that vaping can also harm lung health. These factors put smokers, and in all likelihood vapers as well, at greater risk when confronted with the coronavirus.

Long before this novel coronavirus arrived, California youth were being sentenced to a lifetime of addiction as the skyrocketing youth use of e-cigarettes swept the nation. In November 2018, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported a dramatic increase in youth nicotine use, leading the Surgeon
General and the FDA to declare youth e-cigarette use an epidemic in the United States. The disturbing rates of teen e-cigarette use continued to rise in 2019, with more than 1 in 4 high school students and more than 1 in 10 middle school students using e-cigarettes. Altogether, more than 5.3 million youth were current e-cigarette users in 2019, with the overwhelming majority of youth citing use of popular fruit and menthol or mint flavors.

81 percent of young people who have ever used tobacco started with a flavored product. These products often mimic popular candies, drinks, or snacks in both packaging and flavor, making them particularly appealing to youth. A variety of flavored tobacco products like cotton candy, bubble gum, and mango are widely available on retail shelves. 72 percent of youth tobacco users have used a flavored tobacco product in the past month and at least two-thirds of youth tobacco users report using tobacco products “because they come in flavors I like.”

With the surges in youth nicotine usage and associated public health risks, California needs to take swift action. While the FDA recently announced a partial ban on certain flavored electronic cigarette products, the policy does not go far enough to protect the health and safety of California children by making dangerous exemptions. It is time for California to lead the nation by passing SB 793 to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products.

For these reasons, we are proud to support SB 793.

Sincerely,

African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council
American Academy of Pediatrics, California Chapter
American College of Cardiology - California Chapter
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
California Dental Association
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
California State Parent Teacher Association
Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids
Common Sense Kids Action
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<th>Americans for Nonsmokers’ Rights</th>
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<td>Association of Northern California Oncologists</td>
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<td>Breast Cancer Prevention Partners</td>
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<td>California Children's Hospital Association</td>
<td>L.A. Families Fighting Flavored Tobacco</td>
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