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Big Cities Health Coalition Weighs In On Smoldering E- Cigarettes Debate

The nation's largest cities urge expansion of proposed FDA regulations to restrict marketing of highly addictive, kid-friendly products

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(Washington, DC) -- Today, the Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC), a project of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), officially requested the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) expand their proposed regulations to address the sale, marketing, manufacturing, and labeling of e-cigarettes. In particular, the BCHC noted the lack of regulation on advertising/marketing and e-cigarette flavors. Big Cities Health Coalition members are the health officials leading twenty of the nation's largest metropolitan public health departments and represent more than 47 million Americans. These health departments have a long track record in leading the nation in addressing emerging public health and safety problems.

Due to the potential risk to public health, and in the absence of national leadership from the FDA, many of the largest urban jurisdictions have moved to regulate the sale and use of e-cigarettes. However, not all cities and counties have this regulatory authority, and the FDA should act quickly to fill the existing regulatory gaps and create uniform protection nationwide.

The Big Cities Health Coalition's letter to the FDA highlights several areas where "gaps" in proposed federal regulations exist. Specifically, proposed regulations fall short of sales and workplace use restrictions already implemented in many of our nation's large cities, including Seattle, Boston, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and New York City. E-cigarettes pose a potential health risk because nicotine is a highly addictive substance. E-cigarettes have not been found to be safe for human use by the FDA and have been found to contain dangerous chemicals, carcinogens, and varying degrees of nicotine in the liquid cartridges. E-cigarettes are both appealing and very accessible to children and teens, especially sweet flavors like bubble gum, cherry, and watermelon. Advertisements for these products regularly employ youth-oriented marketing strategies and make unsubstantiated claims about their health and safety. Further, a recent CDC study found a dramatic increase in calls to poison centers related to contact with e-cigarettes, with the highest rates impacting children. Even with the proposed regulations, there will not be federal oversight of these increasingly popular nicotine delivery devices for at least a year, and regulations on advertising and manufacturing will take even longer to implement.



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The Big Cities Health Coalition also cites the following concerns regarding e-cigarettes in its letter to the FDA:

1. E-cigarettes pose a potential risk to public health.
2. E-cigarettes are both appealing and very accessible to youth.
3. E-cigarette advertising is increasing in volume and prominence.
4. E-cigarette marketing uses unsubstantiated claims related to health and safety.
5. E-cigarettes are not required to display any health warnings.

The Big Cities Health Coalition argues that as the e-cigarette industry expands at an incredible rate, it is critical for the FDA to move swiftly and decisively to enact comprehensive e-cigarette regulations.

Signatories to the letter were:

- **Baltimore City Health Department:** Oxiris Barbot, MD, Former Commissioner of Health
- **Boston Public Health Commission:** Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, Med, Executive Director
- **Chicago Department of Public Health:** Bechara Couchair, MD, Commissioner
- **Houston Department of Health and Human Services:** Stephen Williams, MEd, MPA, Director
- **Los Angeles County Department of Public Health:** Jonathan Fielding, MD, MPH, MBA, Health Officer and Director
- **New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:** Mary Travis Bassett, MD, MPH, Commissioner
- **(Phoenix) Maricopa County Department of Public Health:** Bob England, MD, Director
- **Philadelphia Department of Public Health:** Donald Schwarz, MD, Health Commissioner
- **(San Jose) Santa Clara County Public Health:** Sara H. Cody, MD, Health Officer
- **San Francisco Department of Public Health:** Tomas Aragon, MD, DrPH, Health Officer
- **Seattle & King County Public Health:** David Fleming, MD, Director and Health Officer

The Big Cities Health Coalition is made possible through the generous support of the de Beaumont Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

For more information about the Big Cities Health Coalition visit www.bigcitieshealth.org.

About BCHC and the National Association of County and City Health Officials

The Big Cities Health Coalition is an independent voice within the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). NACCHO represents the nation's 2,800 local governmental health departments. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to protect and promote health and well-being for all people in their communities. For more information about NACCHO, please visit www.naccho.org.



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Support for the Big Cities Health Coalition is provided by the de Beaumont Foundation (link) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, www.rwjf.org.

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