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A PROGRAM OF THE CALIFORNIA
FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE PARTNERSHIP

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*FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE
BUILDS PARTNERSHIPS
FOR POSITIVE AND
HEALTH YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT WHICH
ENGAGE YOUTH AS
ACTIVE PARTNERS AND
RESOURCES IN THEIR
COMMUNITIES.*



Tulare County
Office of Education
Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

Dear California,

California youth are calling on you to take action to stop the Tobacco Industry's attack on young people. The California Youth Council (CYC), a statewide leadership team of high school and college-age youth committed to creating healthy communities, is urging you to recognize the magnitude of the possible impact of this November's referendum vote – directly impacting the health of California youth and families. This fall, the ballot will ask you if you support upholding a ban on flavored tobacco. We need your immediate action and solidarity with California youth.

Flavored tobacco products play a significant role in driving tobacco use by young people. The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) notes that nearly 81% of youth tobacco users, ages 12 to 17, reported that the first product they used was flavored. In an effort to protect young people, the state legislature passed Senate Bill 793 (2020), banning the sale of most flavored tobacco products in California.

Big Tobacco, using its financial power to push a referendum on the bill, got enough signatures to suspend the legislation until Californians could vote on the issue in November 2022. The tobacco industry's immense profits come at the cost of the well-being of young people in our communities. The CDC estimates that each year smoking-related illness in the United States costs more than \$300 billion (about \$920 per person in the U.S.).

In short, Big Tobacco is reaping huge profits in exchange for the public's health and safety and is consistently making youth their targets. In 2019, an estimated 4.31 million middle and high school students in the U.S. used a flavored tobacco product in the past 30 days (CDC 2019). Evidence shows that tobacco company advertising and promotion heavily influence young people to start using tobacco. Deceptive marketing tactics promote flavored tobacco products that mirror popular flavors for children, including cereal flavors, popular sweet and sour candy flavors, ice cream, fruit flavors, and more. The tobacco industry has also targeted Black communities in its promotional efforts for menthol cigarettes with marketing campaigns that appropriate Black culture and intentionally place advertisements in communities of color. The misleading and devious marketing tactics mask the reality that tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

The time to step up is now; Big Tobacco cannot be allowed to continue targeting youth. Through the referendum on the November ballot, you can take a stand against the tobacco industry. On behalf of young people across the state, we need you to join the California Youth Council in putting young people's health and safety ahead of the profits of Big Tobacco.

Sincerely,

The California Youth Council