Mike’s Tobacco and E-Cigarettes Policy

Youth vaping has reached epidemic levels: 5.4 million high school and middle school aged kids admitted to being current users of e-cigarettes in 2018, according to the CDC. A 2018 Surgeon General’s Advisory said that e-cigarette use has major risks for children and teenagers including long-term harm to brain development and respiratory health issues. Furthermore, e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is highly addictive and readily leads to the use of combustible tobacco. Ordinary cigarettes, for their part, are a well-known health hazard. Smoking causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung diseases, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. They are the number one cause of preventable disease and death in the U.S. Each year, nearly half a million people die of tobacco-related causes. In recent years, however, cancer deaths have been declining as fewer people smoke.

America’s $7 billion e-cigarette industry remains largely unregulated as the FDA has dragged its feet on reviewing the safety of e-cigarettes. In May, a federal judge ordered the FDA to speed up regulation. Although the Trump administration recently announced a temporary ban on candy- and fruit-flavored cartridge e-cigarettes, thousands of flavors remain available. It’s essential to ban all favored e-cigarettes and otherwise prevent adolescent use.

1. Ban all e-cigarette flavors.

Mike will treat tobacco and e-cigarette use among youth as the public health crisis it is. In addition to immediately banning flavors, he will direct the FDA to speed up its review of e-cigarettes, and also ban flavors including menthol in ordinary cigarettes and cigars. He will push to limit the allowable amount of nicotine in vaping products, as European countries do, and restore FDA efforts to reduce the amount of nicotine in combustible cigarettes and other tobacco products to below addictive levels. To further discourage use, Mike will work to boost the federal cigarette tax by $1 per pack and then index it to inflation; he’ll also raise taxes on cigars, smokeless tobacco and pipe tobacco to put them on par with cigarettes. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that increasing cigarette taxes by 94-cents per pack, equalizing taxes across cigars and other tobacco products, and indexing the new tax to inflation will raise about $80 billion over ten years. They also estimate that applying nicotine taxes to e-cigarettes will raise another $10 billion. This could help fund smoking cessation and research.

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1 CDC, Youth and Tobacco Use.
3 RAND, Youth Who Use Vaping Products Are More Likely to Smoke Cigarettes, Increase Use of Both Over Time, October 2018.
4 CDC, Smoking and Tobacco Use.
6 CDC, Smoking and Tobacco Use.
7 NPR, Progress On Lung Cancer Drives Historic Drop In U.S. Cancer Death Rate, January 2020.
10 CBO, An Analysis of the President’s 2015 Budget, April 2014.
11 CBO, HR 4752 of 2019, October 2019.
2. **Help people quit smoking.**

   Mike would enforce the ACA’s requirement\(^\text{12}\) that health insurance cover counseling and cessation medicines\(^\text{13}\) for smokers trying to quit – without copays, prior authorization requirements, or limits on duration of treatment. And he would direct the FDA to expedite the approval of improved smoking-cessation products through its Center for Drug Evaluation and Research.

3. **Gather accurate data to inform public policy.**

   Because policy should always be informed by data, Mike would restore funding for data collection on smoking and vaping in the U.S. Although the CDC regularly investigates youth tobacco use, the agency has not conducted a tobacco-specific survey of U.S. adults since 2013\(^\text{14}\).

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\(^{12}\) American Lung Association, *Tobacco Cessation Treatment: What Is Covered?*
\(^{13}\) UpToDate, *Pharmacotherapy for Smoking Cessation in Adults*, September 2019.