

BIG TOBACCO -is Desperate Attempt by Big Tobacco to Overrule Governor & Legislature to Keep Hooking Kids With Candy-Flavored Tobacco

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 11, 2020 **Contact:** Jenna Thompson,
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Big Tobacco Looks to Make \$1.2 Billion By Stalling SB 793; Meanwhile 40,000 Kids Will Start Smoking

Public Health Advocates Vow to Defeat Attempt by Big Tobacco to Overturn Landmark Legislation to Protect Kids

Sacramento, CA – Last month, after decades of lies and tricks, and millions of dollars from Big Tobacco that have hooked generations of young people on deadly tobacco products, California took a life-saving, landmark step to protect our youth and save tens of thousands of lives by ending the sale of candy-flavored tobacco products through SB 793 (Hill). Now, **Big Tobacco has launched a referendum of the life-saving law in a clear attempt to delay implementation and protect the profits allowing them to continue to addict our kids.**

“Since day one, the Big Tobacco industry has fed us nothing but lies – spending millions to deceive people about how addictive their products truly are, obfuscating the risks of using e-cigarettes, and the biggest lie of them all: that their candy-flavored products don’t hook kids,” said Carol McGruder, Co-Chair of the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council. “Their decades of racist and predatory targeting of Black people with mentholated tobacco products has resulted in cycles of generational addiction and death. Thankfully, the Legislature and the Governor saw through their dirty tricks when they passed and signed SB 793; and if it ever comes time for Californians to vote on Big Tobacco’s cynical ballot referendum – they’ll see right through the cloud of lies too.”

If the referendum were to qualify, **Big Tobacco will generate \$1.2 billion in profits from the sale of menthol cigarettes alone during the two years that California’s implementation of SB 793’s flavor ban is delayed.** That’s two years of making \$50 million per month, or \$1.64 million per day, while approximately 40,000 more high school kids will start using e-cigarettes.

“Big Tobacco knows it can’t hook kids without candy flavors,” said Meredith Berkman, Parents Against Vaping e-Cigarettes. **“It’s spent tens of millions of dollars desperately losing campaigns in over 80 California cities trying to keep selling candy flavors,** and now it’s trying to overturn this important law supported by Governor Gavin Newsom, bipartisan majorities of state lawmakers and leaders across the state. We are confident California’s voters will see through Big Tobacco’s campaign of lies once again and finally stop the candy-flavored profit made at the expense of our kids for good.”

With the passage of SB 793 (Hill), California became the second state in the nation to end the sale of flavored tobacco products, including menthol. The legislation was passed with bipartisan majorities in both the Assembly and Senate this year and quickly signed by Governor Gavin Newsom after reaching his desk.

“Every day that the tobacco industry stalls this lifesaving law from doing its job, it makes money and California kids suffer,” said Lindsey Freitas, Advocacy Director for Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. **“We already know Big Tobacco likes to fight dirty and lie to make a buck, but this is truly a new low. We must not allow Big Tobacco to cloud this life-saving victory in smoke.”**

“It is cynical, but not surprising that Big Tobacco has filed to repeal SB 793 after the bill received overwhelming bipartisan support. The fact that tobacco companies continue these predatory practices - especially during a global pandemic, confirms they do not care about the kids they are trying to recruit as

lifelong customers,” said Kathy Rogers, Executive Vice President, American Heart Association Western States Region.

“Passage of the landmark SB 793 (Hill) legislation, restricting the sale of flavored tobacco products in California, **is critical to the health of Californians and to protect our youth from a lifetime of tobacco use,”** said Erica Costa, Director of Advocacy for the American Lung Association in California. “Unfortunately a cynical referendum to repeal this law is being pushed by the tobacco industry solely to protect their profits at the expense of our children’s health.”

“**Californians are wise to the shameful antics Big Tobacco uses to ensnare kids into a lifetime addiction to tobacco to protect profits,”** said American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network Managing Director Jim Knox. “Even if the tobacco industry is successful in getting enough signatures to qualify its despicable ploy, I’m confident voters will see through it and side with public health to clear store shelves of unsafe flavored tobacco products.”

“**We are strongly opposed to Big Tobacco’s cynical ploy to keep highly addictive, candy-flavored nicotine products in the hands of children,”** said Dr. Richard Nagy, California Dental Association president. “With a resounding passage through the Legislature and swift action by Gov. Newsom, it is clear that Californians prioritize oral health and overall health over corporate greed.”

“**It is not surprising that Big Tobacco has come forward to challenge a law that protects youth, who are almost exclusively and explicitly targeted by these flavored tobacco products,”** said Peter N. Bretan, Jr. M.D., President of the California Medical Association. “The Legislature and the Governor passed this landmark protection with broad-based support, and for good reason – the tobacco industry preys on our youth and their predatory tactics must be stopped. CMA is no stranger to the fight against Big Tobacco and will continue to champion efforts that protect our youth and improve our public health.”

Sent: Thursday, September 17, 2020 12:12 PM

Subject: House Democratic leaders cancelled a vote on the MORE Act, a bill to federally legalize and commercialize marijuana

(Alexandria, VA) - Today, after weeks of pushback, House Democratic leaders cancelled a vote on the MORE Act, a bill to federally legalize and commercialize marijuana. Dr. Kevin Sabet, president of [Smart Approaches to Marijuana \(SAM\)](#) and a former senior drug policy advisor to the Obama Administration released the following statement in response:

“This is a massive victory for public health, safety, and quite frankly commonsense. Thanks to the actions taken by our thousands of supporters and the many coalition members we have activated nationwide, we have defeated the MORE Act.

"While almost 200,000 Americans have died from COVID-19 and millions more are desperate for aid due to the resulting economic fallout, the fact that marijuana legalization was even on anyone's mind is inconceivable.

"This bill was a non-starter from the very beginning. It would accomplish nothing more than greatly benefiting an addiction-for-profit industry and make our country less-safe by removing marijuana testing requirements from safety sensitive positions such as truck drivers and airline pilots.

"Furthermore, encouraging marijuana use in disadvantaged communities is a social injustice. In states that have expanded this industry, pot shops are disproportionately located in communities of color and low income. Overall, less than two percent of the marijuana industry is owned by minorities from any community. Those most harmed by previous drug laws are not the ones benefited by commercialization. This bill would only enrich the wealthy, white investors from Big Tobacco, alcohol conglomerates, and Big Pharma.

"Today's news tells us many things. Creating new addiction-for-profit drug industries is untenable with the electorate during an election year. Once again, we learn that marijuana legalization is not inevitable - despite what well-paid lobbyists are telling us. And finally, SAM and its allies have ensured no new marijuana legalization bills have made significant progress for yet another congress."