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Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act

ACTION

NASN urges Congress to pass the Reversing Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act of 2019, HR 2339, that would protect children and teens from a surge of tobacco use and tobacco-related health issues. This legislation calls on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to address the leading drivers of youth tobacco use. Congress can reverse the youth e-cigarette epidemic and continue to reduce youth tobacco use by passing this important legislation. HR 2339 was introduced by Representatives Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Representative Donna Shalala (D-FL)

HISTORY

- Both FDA and the Surgeon General have classified youth use of e-cigarettes as an epidemic.
- Between 2017 and 2019, e-cigarette use increased by 135 percent among high school students: from 11.7 percent to 27.5 percent respectively.
- Tobacco flavors in e-cigarettes, cigarettes and cigars have saturated the marketplace, and their use among teen agers has skyrocketed. Among high school students who use e-cigarettes, 65.9 percent use fruit-flavored e-cigarettes and 63.9 percent use mint or menthol e-cigarettes. Use of mint and menthol e-cigarettes among high school students has increased by more than 50 percent in the last two years.

BACKGROUND

- **The legislation would prohibit the sale of tobacco products to anyone under 21.** About 95 percent of adult smokers begin smoking before they turn 21 years old. If a person does not begin using tobacco product in their 20's, they are unlikely to ever do so. Raising the tobacco sale age to 21 will help keep tobacco from youth.
- **The legislation would curtail use of flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes.** Flavors mask the taste of tobacco and make it easier for youth to start using a product and ultimately to become addicted. Prohibiting tobacco products in youth-friendly flavors is one of the most important actions Congress can take to reverse the youth e-cigarette epidemic and continue to reduce youth tobacco use.
- **The legislation would prohibit online sales of tobacco products.** Online sales provide youth with easy access to tobacco products and create challenges for enforcement of federal, state, and local laws related to the manufacture, marketing, and sale of tobacco products. Internet sites that sell tobacco products often fail to use effective age verification strategies and offer products that violate FDA requirements.