

August 16, 2001

Chair
State Board of Education
Any State, USA

Dear Chair of the State Board of Education:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to urge you to refuse funding from or any other type of relationship with the tobacco industry and to urge the local boards of education in your state to do the same. Entering into any partnership with the tobacco industry sends an inconsistent message to our children about tobacco use. Ultimately, the harm done outweighs any potential value of funding that a tobacco company might provide.

In the past few years, the tobacco companies have made numerous efforts to get their names into our schools and before school children. Perhaps the most publicized recent example was the nationwide distribution of Philip Morris-sponsored book covers during the past school year. These covers included appealing pictures with weak anti-smoking messages, Philip Morris' name and the same Surgeon General's warning that appears on every pack of cigarettes. Fortunately, school systems across the country vehemently rejected this thinly veiled attempt at marketing.

Some of the tobacco companies have developed what they claim to be anti-smoking programs that have not been evaluated or tested by credible sources, and which are often distributed to school without request and free of charge. Examples of these include RJ Reynolds' "Right Decisions, Right Now " curriculum and Brown & Williamson's "Sly's Unwise Surprise," a book aimed at very young children. These efforts are ineffective at best and, if used in place of proven and effective programs, are counter-productive and damaging to real prevention efforts. They have no place in our schools.

In other cases, such as Philip Morris' funding of Life Skills Training, a respected and effective curriculum, the source of the funding became a contentious issue, tainting any positive effects of implementing the program. This funding has become so controversial that one of the two vendors selling this curriculum, the well-respected Channing L. Bete Company, will no longer sell it to school systems that use money from tobacco companies.

We believe that the motivation behind these programs is not to reduce tobacco use among kids, but rather to gain positive publicity, deflect political pressure, avoid government regulation and create the appearance of action. The tobacco industry's efforts to partner with educational institutions is just another in a long line of public relations initiatives designed to gain legitimacy by making it appear reformed and responsible. If these efforts succeed, the tobacco companies will be able to avoid real change and continue business as usual.

Many of the school districts that the tobacco companies have approached with offers of money have rejected tobacco company support, viewing it as inappropriate and in conflict with their mission of serving children. Unfortunately, other districts have taken the industry bait and have found themselves the targets of bad publicity and mired in public controversy. Additionally, while the tobacco industry claims that there are no strings attached to these grants, the truth is quite different. The tobacco companies use

these grants to school systems as proof of their good works when they approach legislators and other policy makers in their efforts to thwart meaningful regulation.

What makes these tobacco industry efforts all the more alarming are several recent studies and reports, which show that the industry continues to market cigarettes in ways that impact and appeal to kids. The most recent report by the Federal Trade Commission on tobacco marketing found that the industry actually increased its marketing expenditures by record levels the year after it signed a legal agreement promising not to market to kids. According to the report, tobacco marketing reached a record high of \$8.24 billion in 1999, a 22.3 percent increase over the previous year. This amounts to a staggering \$22.5 million spent on tobacco marketing every day.

In May 2000, a Massachusetts Department of Health study found that tobacco advertising in magazines with high youth readership – such as Sports Illustrated, Rolling Stone and Spin – increased by 33 percent after the tobacco settlement with the states. A July 2000 study by the University of Illinois at Chicago found that after a settlement-mandated ban on tobacco billboards went into effect, tobacco ads and promotions increased significantly at retail stores. The tobacco industry knows that 75 percent of kids visit a convenience store at least once a week, providing a perfect outlet for tobacco advertising that reaches kids.

Finally, Stanford University released a study in June that found that half of cigarette ad placements in California retail outlets are at or below three feet - eye level for many children. The study also showed that nearly a quarter of all retail outlets had cigarette products directly next to candy displays and that the average store had 17 tobacco ads.

The tobacco companies clearly have not changed and are continuing to aim their marketing at kids. At the same time, they are attempting to use educational partnerships to avoid fundamental change in their marketing and manufacturing practices that would truly reduce youth tobacco use.

For these reasons, we believe that any partnership between the tobacco industry and the education community constitutes a fundamental conflict of interest and is unwise. Enclosed is a recent fact sheet about tobacco industry marketing to kids that we hope you will find helpful. Please do not hesitate to call any of us if you have any questions or need more information.

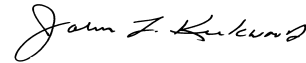
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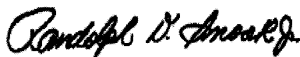
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