



June 25, 2003

Richard Carmona M.D., M.P.H., F.A.C.S  
Surgeon General  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue SW  
Ste. 716G  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Dr. Carmona:

As organizations committed to reducing and preventing suffering and death from tobacco-caused disease, we are writing to thank you for your strong testimony at the House of Representatives, Energy and Commerce Committee hearing titled "Can Tobacco Cure Smoking? A Review of Tobacco Harm Reduction." We agree wholeheartedly with your comments that the use of any tobacco product is not a safe alternative to smoking and that it is particularly important to communicate that message to young people and adults who may perceive smokeless tobacco as a safer form of tobacco.

Your comments were consistent with the proud tradition of the Surgeon General's office speaking out about the tremendous harm caused by tobacco use. You clearly and forcefully countered the arguments put forth by U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company (USSTC) in its efforts to advertise smokeless tobacco products as less hazardous than cigarettes. As you noted in your testimony, the Office of the Surgeon General has concluded since 1986 that smokeless tobacco represents a significant health risk, can cause cancer and other non-cancerous oral diseases, can lead to nicotine addiction and dependence, and is not a safer substitute for cigarette smoking. Smokeless tobacco companies should not be able to market their products in a manner that misleads the public about the dangers of these products.

We expect that USSTC will continue to press Congress and the Federal Trade Commission for approval to advertise its smokeless tobacco products as a safer alternative to smoking. Congress will also continue the debate over Food and Drug Administration authority over tobacco products. It is, therefore, critical that you and other public health officials continue to speak out. As the debate over the regulation of tobacco products, including smokeless tobacco products, continues, the full weight of your office will be vital to avoiding the repetition of the country's experience with "light" and "low-tar" cigarettes.

Again, we thank you for speaking out so clearly about the dangers of tobacco use and using your position in an effort to reduce the terrible toll of tobacco on our nation's health. Please know that our organizations stand ready to work with you to communicate to the public the health risks associated with smokeless and other tobacco products. Feel free to contact any of our organizations if we can be of assistance to you or your staff.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners  
American Cancer Society  
American College of Chest Physicians  
American College of Preventive Medicine  
American Dental Association  
American Heart Association  
American Lung Association  
American Medical Women's Association  
American Public Health Association  
American School Health Association  
American Society of Addiction Medicine  
American Thoracic Society  
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs  
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids  
Center for Tobacco Cessation  
Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America  
Interreligious Coalition on Smoking OR Health  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of Local Boards of Health  
National Center for Policy Research for Women & Families  
Mautner Project  
Oncology Nursing Society  
Oral Health America  
Partnership for Prevention

cc: Secretary Thompson