Open Letter to America's Retailers, Especially Those with Pharmacies

From Leading Public Health and Medical Organizations

February 26, 2014

As organizations committed to ending the tobacco epidemic in the United States, we applaud the bold decision by CVS Caremark to eliminate the sale of cigarettes and other tobacco products in all its stores. We urge other retailers, especially those with pharmacies, to move quickly to end tobacco sales in their stores. CVS Caremark is absolutely right: The sale of tobacco products – the number one cause of preventable death and disease – is fundamentally inconsistent with a commitment to improving health.

As we observe the 50th Anniversary of the landmark 1964 U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health, the science on tobacco is unequivocal and inescapable. Tobacco products are uniquely lethal and addictive. They rob us of 480,000 American lives each year, sicken millions more and cost the nation at least $289 billion annually in healthcare expenses and other economic losses.

The latest Surgeon General's report also underscored that tobacco use is a pediatric epidemic – 90 percent of adult smokers start by age 18 or earlier, and 5.6 million children alive today will die prematurely of smoking-caused disease unless all segments of our society join together to take strong action.

No corporation truly devoted to saving lives – like the nation's pharmacies are – can continue to simultaneously reap billions in profits from products that kill nearly half of the people who use them. Neither can any corporation committed to the well-being of our nation's children.

CVS Caremark's decision was met with cheers from their customers and the public at large because it is simply the right thing to do. We urge other retailers, especially those with pharmacies, to put our nation's children and health before tobacco profits and move quickly to end tobacco sales. Such action would reduce the availability and marketing of tobacco products, accelerate progress in reducing tobacco use and ultimately help end the tobacco epidemic for good.

Respectfully,

American Association for Respiratory Care
American Association for Cancer Research
American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Cardiology
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Lung Association
American Public Health Association
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Thoracic Society
Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights
Action on Smoking & Health
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Cancer Prevention and Treatment Fund
CASA Columbia
Legacy
LIVESTRONG
Lung Cancer Alliance
National Consumers League
National African American Tobacco Prevention Network
National Association of City and County Health Officials
National Latino Alliance for Health Equity
National Physicians Alliance
North American Quitline Consortium
Oncology Nursing Society
Partnership for Prevention
Smoking Cessation Leadership Center
Trust for American's Health