



Santa Clara County Office of Education

Mary Ann Dewan, Ph.D.
County Superintendent of Schools

San Jose City Council
200 E. Santa Clara St.
San José, CA 95113

December 10, 2020

Dear Council Members Carrasco, Foley, Esparza, Jimenez, and Arenas,

Santa Clara County Office of Education supports the development of an ordinance to strengthen your tobacco retailer licensing law and restrict flavored tobacco products in the City of San Jose. We applaud the efforts of San Jose in taking the necessary steps to protect youth from addiction and dangerous health risks.

Santa Clara County Office of Education supports taking action on flavored e-cigarettes as one-piece of this issue, but given that use of flavored tobacco products is widespread across all tobacco products, combustible and non-combustible, regulations should be comprehensive to include all tobacco products including Menthol. Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm the developing adolescent brain.

Furthermore, Tobacco companies are using candy-flavored products to hook youth into a dangerous addiction to nicotine. Most young people who have used tobacco started with a flavored product. These products often mimic popular candies, drinks, or snacks in both packaging and flavor, making them particularly appealing to youth. **In Santa Clara County 82.3 percent of teens currently using tobacco reported using a flavored product.** More alarming, 45.4 percent of teens in Santa Clara County reported purchasing their own e-cigarettes, with over a quarter of this group saying they buy them directly from a local store. Among Santa Clara County teens, about two-thirds of current cigarette smokers (63%) reported using menthol/mint cigarettes.

There is growing evidence that smokers are at a greater risk of hospitalization and severe illness due to COVID-19. In addition, there is growing evidence that vaping can also harm lung health. These factors put smokers, and in all likelihood vapers as well, at greater risk when confronted with the coronavirus.

While the California Legislature did recently pass SB 793 (flavored tobacco products), tobacco companies are seeking to place it on the ballot, effectively putting it on hold. Therefore, it is crucial that action is taken within the City of San Jose to protect our youth.

As a community, we have the responsibility to keep our youth safe from harmful tobacco and vape products. We advocate banning ALL flavored tobacco products, including hookah, in all locations, restricting e-cigarette and vape product sales, restricting density of tobacco retailers near schools and existing retailers, and eliminating the adult-only store exemption.



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We appreciate our partnership to keep our youth safe, healthy and in school.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mary Ann Dewan
Superintendent of Schools
Santa Clara County Office of Education