



## PREVENTING TOBACCO ADDICTION FOUNDATION

### Big Tobacco, Big Hypocrisy

As if it weren't appalling enough when the Wall Street Journal reported on April 4 that both British American Tobacco PLC and Philip Morris International Inc. are in the process of developing a potential [vaccine](#) for COVID-19, the LA Times today published an expose' of how the tobacco and vaping industry is [exploiting](#) the pandemic to push its deadly and addictive products.

***So, which is it, Big Tobacco: Do you want to save our lungs or destroy them? Do you care enough about our lungs to stop making and selling your deadly products, the use of which is attributed to 500,000 deaths per year in the U.S.?***

***Apparently not...***

The L.A. Times writes:

*'As the global pandemic strains the world's inventory of medical supplies, the tobacco and vaping industries are taking advantage of a unique opportunity, offering freebie protective gear, doorstep deliveries, and festive pandemic-themed discounts. Some players have donated ventilators and mounted charity campaigns.*

*The tobacco companies insist they are simply doing their part to help during the crisis. But the coronavirus-related marketing has been criticized by anti-smoking advocates who call it hypocritical and potentially dangerous. They note that people with lungs damaged by smoking are at an elevated risk if they catch the virus, and that vaping has been linked to a growth in tobacco use, particularly among teens.'*

While COVID-19 is a serious threat, so too is tobacco. Not only is smoking a likely risk factor for COVID-19, it is also associated with countless other diseases, including cancers, heart disease and COPD, not to mention addiction.

***Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death.*** Tobacco [kills](#) almost 500,000 Americans every year, more than all deaths from human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle injuries, suicides, and murders combined. If Big Tobacco really cared about your health, then they'd cease production of this harmful product.

***If Big Tobacco cared about your lungs it wouldn't be addicting a new generation through predatory marketing, innovative flavors, and nicotine products.***



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In 2019, over 35% of high school seniors reported tobacco product use in the last 30 days. This skyrocketing in youth use came at a time when youth combustible use was at an all-time low. Big Tobacco recognized this problem in their consumer base and engaged in deliberate campaigns to hook the next generation. They were successful: millions of middle schoolers and high schoolers who would never have smoked cigarettes are now using e-cigarettes regularly, many of them seriously addicted, and the trend shows no sign of abating.

In an infamous memo from a Lorillard Tobacco Company executive to the former Lorillard President regarding the Newport cigarette brand, the executive [wrote](#), “the base of our business is the high-school student.” Tobacco companies are aware that if they do not engage new users by their early twenties, they most likely never will. With this knowledge and in response to a decline in combustible cigarette use among our youth, the tobacco industry, including companies like JUUL, deliberately used and continues to use innovative products and flavors and predatory marketing to attract the next generation of smokers.

As COVID-19, a highly contagious and sometimes life-threatening lower respiratory disease, looms ever-present in our lives everyday now, Big Tobacco wants to help YOU stay healthy? ***This is not only appalling, it’s downright vile.*** Indeed, if Big Tobacco cared about your health, it wouldn’t advertise, promote, and give away products that addict and make you sick, exploiting your fears and vulnerability at this challenging and unsettling time.

***Big Tobacco should consider using the COVID-19 pandemic downtime to reassess its business model which profits from addiction, disease, despair, and death.***