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Governor Whitmer cuts deal with JUUL, signs dangerous tobacco legislation

SB 720 lowers taxes on some tobacco products, making them more accessible and affordable to youth

Lansing, Mich. – Instead of protecting Michigan youth, Governor Gretchen Whitmer chose to cut a deal with JUUL and signed dangerous legislation that will fuel a growing youth tobacco epidemic.

More than 80 public health and child advocacy organizations that make up the Keep MI Kids Tobacco Alliance strongly opposed Senate Bill 720, but Gov. Whitmer still prioritized the needs of the tobacco industry over the health of Michigan's youth. In committee hearings as SB 720 was discussed, JUUL was the only organization supporting the legislation while the more than 80 organizations across the state that make up the Alliance opposed the bill. SB 720 lowers the tax rate for modified-risk tobacco products, weakening Michigan's tobacco-control policies and makes them more accessible and affordable to our youth.

"Nothing should be put ahead of the health of Michiganders but that happened today with the signing of Senate Bill 720," said Jodi Radke of Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. "Governor Whitmer and Michigan lawmakers should be ashamed that they have now made it easier for our youth to get their hands on tobacco products."

SB 720, as well as four other bills that raise the age of sale to 21 but lack enforcement mechanisms to actually ensure tobacco products aren't sold to youth, were signed today by Governor Whitmer.

"It's unacceptable that Michigan legislators sided with the tobacco industry over the dozens of public health organizations working to keep kids safe," said Shannon Quinby of Preventing Tobacco Addiction Foundation. "The signing of this package today takes Michigan down a dangerous path that ignores the need to protect youth from tobacco."

The Alliance has expressed opposition to the entire package throughout the legislative process and has been calling for Governor Whitmer to veto Senate Bill 720, which has the most dangerous consequences.

"We are still facing a youth tobacco epidemic and should be working to strengthen our tobacco control policies to protect our youth, not weakening them," said Paul Steiner, executive director of Tobacco Free Michigan. "All tobacco products carry risks, even ones labeled "modified-risk" and it's alarming that our elected leaders are ignoring our concerns and the need to protect our youth."

The Alliance plans to continue fighting to strengthen Michigan's tobacco-control policies that will better protect Michigan youth, including the creation of tobacco retail licensing that would hold retailers accountable for selling tobacco products to underage customers.

Members of the Keep MI Kids Tobacco Free Alliance include:

- ACCESS Community Health and Research Center
- All Well Being Services- SUD Prevention
- Allegiance Health
- Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities
- American Cancer Society - Cancer Action Network
- American Heart Association
- American Indian Veterans of Michigan
- American Lung Association
- Arbor Circle
- Ascension Michigan
- Barry County Tobacco Reduction Coalition
- Barry-Eaton District Health Department
- Beaumont Teen Health Center
- BreatheWell Newaygo County
- Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
- CARE of Southeastern Michigan
- Chaldean Community Foundation
- Cherry Health
- Child Advocacy-Gratiot County Substance Abuse Coalition
- Chippewa County Health Department
- City of Flint- Public Health Department
- Community Mental Health Association of Michigan
- Detroit Wayne Oakland Tobacco-Free Coalition
- District 10 Health Department
- Genesee County Health Department
- Genesee Health Plan
- Genesee County ISD
- Genesee County Medical Society
- Genesee County Prevention Coalition
- Grand Rapids Red Project
- Health Department of Northwest Michigan
- Healthy Youth Coalition of Marinette & Menominee Counties
- Henry Ford Health System
- Hurley Medical Center
- Ingham County Health Department
- Ingham County Medical Society
- Kent County Health Connect
- Lakeshore Regional Entity
- Legacy Center for Community Success
- Lifeways
- Making It Count Community Development Corporation
- Mercy Health
- McLaren Health Care
- Michigan's Children
- Michigan Academy of Family Physicians
- Michigan Association of Local Public Health
- Michigan Black Caucus Foundation
- Michigan Catholic Conference
- Michigan Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics
- Michigan Chapter of American College of Cardiology
- Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health
- Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners
- Michigan Health and Hospital Association
- Michigan League for Public Policy/Kids' Count
- Michigan Nurses Association
- Michigan Oral Health Coalition
- Michigan Osteopathic Association
- Michigan Public Health Association
- Michigan Society of Addiction Medicine
- Michigan Society of Hematology and Oncology
- Michigan State Medical Society
- Michigan State University – College of Human Medicine
- Michigan State University Extension
- Michigan Thoracic Society
- Mid-Michigan District Health Department
- Newaygo County Great Start Collaborative
- Parents Against Vaping
- Prevention Network Michigan
- Preventing Tobacco Addiction Foundation
- Sacred Heart Center
- Saint Joseph Mercy Health System
- School-Community Health Alliance of Michigan
- South Eastern Michigan Indians
- Spectrum Health
- St. Clair County Health Department
- Ten16 Recovery Network
- Tobacco Free Michigan
- Tobacco Free Network
- Trinity Health
- Urban League of West Michigan
- Wayne County Department of Health, Human and Veterans
- Washtenaw County Health Department
- Washtenaw County Medical Society

For more information on the Keep MI Kids Tobacco Free Alliance, visit keepmikiidstobaccofree.com.

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