

Opening Statement of Representative Anna G. Eshoo – 5 minutes
Subcommittee on Health
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
“Legislation to Reverse the Youth Tobacco Epidemic”
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
October 16, 2019

- Smoking kills. It is the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S.
- Cigarette smoking is responsible for more than 480,000 deaths in the U.S. each year and more than 16 million Americans are living with a disease caused by smoking. These health problems cost our country more than \$300 billion a year.
- But despite knowing the consequences of smoking for over half a century, we’re still raising children who smoke.
- In 2018, 4.9 million middle and high school students were current users of some type of tobacco product or e-cigarette. Many of those children will be life-long smokers. Over 90% of adult smokers began smoking before they turned 21.

- The tobacco industry knows the best way to continue their business is to aggressively target children with their addictive products, so that they'll have guaranteed customers for decades.
- That's why ten years ago, I was proud to vote, along with both Democratic and Republican members of this committee, for the *Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009*. This law restricted marketing tobacco products to children and banned most of the flavored cigarettes made to appeal to children.
- After that law passed, youth tobacco use declined.
- But e-cigarettes reversed that trend. For the first time in decades, the CDC reports youth tobacco use is rising significantly. Because of e-cigarettes, 1.5 million more youth used a tobacco product in 2018 compared to 2017. High school e-cigarette users are 4 to 7 times more likely to adopt traditional cigarette use than their non-vaping peers.
- Our work to end tobacco use and nicotine addiction in the U.S. is at risk.

- We've been caught flat-footed by the popularity of e-cigarettes among young people. And now, in the midst of the youth e-cigarette epidemic, we're seeing an outbreak of a vaping-related illness with nearly 1,300 cases and 26 deaths. This illness is affecting children -- 36% of the patients are under 20 years old.
- Just last month, the FDA Acting Commissioner told our Oversight Subcommittee that the FDA "should have acted sooner" to rein in e-cigarettes.
- Despite the lessons from the *Tobacco Control Act of 2009*, we haven't extended its bipartisan restrictions to e-cigarettes.
- The bill we're considering today, Chairman Pallone and Representative Shalala's *Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act*, fixes that problem. The bill extends tobacco marketing, sale, flavor restrictions and fees to e-cigarettes, while also making the landmark change of raising the minimum age to buy tobacco products to 21 years.

- This bill will save lives. Raising the tobacco age to 21 will result in a quarter of a million fewer premature deaths for those born between 2000 and 2019. It is comprehensive legislation that will reverse youth e-cigarette use and drive down youth tobacco use overall.
- We can't allow young Americans to be ensnared in nicotine addiction. It's time to do everything we can to end youth tobacco use. I look forward to working with all my colleagues on a bill to do just that.