



July 24, 1998

The Honorable Newt Gingrich
U.S. House of Representatives
2428 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-1006

Dear Speaker Gingrich:

The ENACT coalition, a coalition of major public health organizations, is very concerned about the tobacco proposal being considered by the House Leadership which we understand may be brought up for a vote before the August recess. While ENACT had hoped to have a more detailed proposal to review, given the short time that is available we feel it is important to express our preliminary concerns.

The proposal as outlined would do little to protect kids from tobacco and in some key aspects it would be a significant step backwards in the battle to end tobacco's grip on children. For example, the outline indicates that the Food and Drug Administration's authority over tobacco products would be cut back, making it more difficult for FDA to effectively implement strategies needed to reduce the death toll from tobacco. The proposal would cut back on national efforts to restrict youth access to tobacco and divert attention from the need to hold the tobacco industry accountable. In sum, this proposal contains virtually none of the policies ENACT believes are critical to reducing tobacco use among children.

This proposal would protect the tobacco industry by making it appear as though Congress has enacted legislation that would reduce tobacco use among kids, but which would actually not in any way restrict the ability of the tobacco companies to target America's children. It disproportionately punishes youth instead of holding the tobacco companies and their allies accountable for decades of marketing and illegally selling to kids.

ENACT supports bi-partisan, comprehensive and effective legislation that make progress towards reducing the toll of the leading preventable cause of disease and death. To that end, we are eager to work with members of Congress from both parties on crafting legislation that contains the important policy provisions that will make a difference. We look forward to working with you on a solution that moves us forward.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

American College of Chest Physicians
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin
American Cancer Society
American College of Physicians-American Society of Internal Medicine
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Dental Association
American Heart Association
American Society of Clinical Oncology
Association of Black Cardiologists, Inc.
Association of Schools of Public Health
Association of Teachers of Preventive Medicine
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Children's Defense Fund
College on Problems of Drug Dependence
Federation of Behavioral, Psychological and Cognitive Sciences
Interreligious Coalition on Smoking OR Health
National Association of Children's Hospitals
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Local Boards of Health
Partnership for Prevention
Society of Critical Care Medicine
Society for Public Health Education
Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco
The HMO Group