June 3, 2022

To:

President Rodrigo Roa Duterte

Office of the President of the Philippines

Malancañang Complex

J.P. Laurel Street

San Miguel, Manila

1005

From:

Tholos Foundation

722 12th Street NW

Washington, DC, USA

Dear President Duterte,

On behalf of the Tholos Foundation, a non-profit organization which advocates in the interests of taxpayers and consumers across the globe, **we urge you in the strongest possible terms to consider the benefits of Senate Bill 2239,** **the Vaporized Nicotine Products Regulation Act, which will both increase tax revenue and greatly improve public health in the Philippines.** Adult consumers deserve legal access to life-saving vaping devices.

There is overwhelming scientific consensus in support of e-cigarettes as smoking cessation devices. Legalizing e-cigarettes will encourage Filipino cigarette smokers to make the switch to e-cigarettes. This will **drastically improve health outcomes across the country and help decrease socioeconomic disparities.**

These reduced-risk alternatives to traditional cigarettes have produced outstanding results in many countries. All evidence presented in this letter is based entirely upon scientific studies and analysis from the world’s top researchers. We urge you to accept this science, legalize e-cigarettes, and encourage adult consumers across the Philippines to transition to safer products.

Contrary to popular belief, e-cigarettes are not a product invented by tobacco companies. In 2001, a Chinese man called Hon Lik, a cigarette smoker himself, created the world’s first e-cigarette after his father succumbed to lung cancer caused by deadly cigarettes. The major difference between e-cigarettes and traditional cigarettes is how the “smoke” is created. In cigarettes, a combustion process creates smoke. This process is what produces many of the harmful chemicals that cause cigarette smokers, and innocent bystanders, to be subject to significant damage to their health.

**E-cigarettes do not have a combustion process, and therefore lack many of the dangerous chemicals that are present in combustible cigarettes.** As a result, e-cigarettes are a significantly less harmful way of consuming nicotine. According to a study from Public Health England**, e-cigarettes are at least** [**95% less harmful**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/e-cigarettes-and-heated-tobacco-products-evidence-review) **than traditional cigarettes.** A separate, comprehensive analysis of the harm of different nicotine products estimated that e-cigarettes contain just 4% of the harm of cigarettes.

It is important to note that it is the combustion, not the nicotine, that causes disease and cancer among cigarette users. Nicotine is a relatively benign substance like caffeine that “does not result in [clinically significant](https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/nicotine-without-smoke-tobacco-harm-reduction) short- or long-term harms”. Nicotine replacement therapies, like gums or patches, have been available for decades but often fail in their mission of helping smokers quit. E-cigarettes mimic the habitual nature of smoking while creating vapor, rather than harmful smoke, to remove the deadly carcinogens in tobacco.

As such, [**statements in support**](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ty7pgRBxvI1nuJzHWxclzNlu569Hozn6/view) **of e-cigarettes have been released by over 100 public health organizations across the globe**. This list includes the British Medical Association, New Zealand Ministry of Health, Royal College of Physicians, French National Academy of Medicine, the American Heart Association, and many more.

Further, **E-cigarettes are products with lifesaving capabilities**. According to a [study](https://newsroom.heart.org/news/vaping-combined-with-smoking-is-likely-as-harmful-as-smoking-cigarettes-alone) by the American Heart Association, **switching from smoking to nicotine vaping lowers the risk of stroke by 84%.** The same study found that the heart health biomarkers of e-cigarette users are similar to, or indistinguishable from, people who had never smoked a cigarette. The United States National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [stated](https://www.nap.edu/resource/24952/012318ecigaretteConclusionsbyEvidence.pdf) “there is *conclusive evidence* that completely substituting e-cigarettes for combustible tobacco cigarettes reduces users’ exposure to numerous toxicants and carcinogens present in combustible cigarettes”.

According to a large-scale [analysis](https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/27/1/18) from Georgetown University Medical Center, an estimated 6.6 million American lives would be saved if a majority of cigarette smokers made the switch to e-cigarettes. Extrapolating this data, we estimate that **the legalization of e-cigarettes in the Philippines could save over 2,195,000 lives.** The smoking rate in the Philippines ([23.5](https://psa.gov.ph/press-releases/id/11288) as of 2010) is significantly higher than the United States ([12.5%](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/adult_data/cig_smoking/index.htm#:~:text=This%20means%20an%20estimated%2030.8,with%20a%20smoking%2Drelated%20disease.&text=Current%20smoking%20has%20declined%20from,every%20100%20adults)%20in%202020.) as of 2020). It can therefore be expected that **Filipino access to e-cigarettes could save many more than two million lives, likely closer to four million.**

There is ample evidence to suggest that cigarette smokers will be willing to make the lifesaving switch to e-cigarettes. A recent study found that a smoker who attempts to quit with an e-cigarette has an estimated [323% higher chance](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6626064/) of achieving complete cessation compared to someone using a traditional nicotine replacement therapy like patches, gum, or oral spray. Another study found that -cigarettes [are more than two times as effective](https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/nejmoa1808779) at getting smokers to quit than traditional nicotine replacement products.

E-cigarettes have a demonstrated ability to reduce smoking. In the United States, the adult smoking rate was 21.6 when e-cigarettes entered the market in 2003. **Due to increased access to vaping, the U.S. adult smoking** [**rate**](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5420a3.htm#:~:text=In%202003%2C%20an%20estimated%2021.6,8.6%20million)%20smoked%20some%20days.) **has plummeted to 13.7% as of 2018**. In the United Kingdom, a new [analysis](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vaping-in-england-evidence-update-february-2021/vaping-in-england-2021-evidence-update-summary) from 2021 by Public Health England demonstrated just how effective vaping is in helping people quit smoking, noting that in just one year, over 50,000 British smokers, who would have continued smoking otherwise, quit smoking with vaping. The current prohibition on e-cigarettes in the Philippines takes away people’s ability to use the best available products to end their deadly habit of smoking.

Scientific [studies](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2766787) have shown that **e-cigarette use can “reduce health disparities”.** The reason for this is smoking rates are historically highest among those with lower income and less education. This will **“translate directly into lower medical costs” and would produce “an improved quality of life”** for these disadvantaged populations.

Additionally, there is [scientific evidence](https://www.atr.org/study-high-strength-nicotine-e-cigarettes-dramatically-help-smokers-mental-health-issues-quit) that **nicotine-containing e-cigarettes dramatically help people with mental health issues quit smoking**, even when they have no desire to quit. For people who suffer from schizophrenia, vaping has a demonstrated ability to better their mood, make them feel more awake, less irritable, and have improved concentration. These communities smoke at rates three to four times higher than average. Efforts to increase smoking cessation among people with mental health issues must be a major priority.

The legalization of vaping in the Philippines will offer underserved communities a method of decreasing the harm they are subjected to by cigarette smoking. This will reap benefits for public health throughout the country.

Prohibitions, like the Philippines’ current prohibition on e-cigarettes, promote illicit markets for these products that can have deadly consequences. **Tobacco and nicotine-product smuggling is largely run by highly organized, international crime syndicates. These organizations use their smuggling profits to fund more nefarious activities including human trafficking, money laundering, and terrorism.** Because of this, the U.S. State Department has explicitly labelled tobacco smuggling a “[threat to national security](https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/250513.pdf)”.

Illicit products also lack the regulation and safety standards of legal products. Mr. President, SB 2239 presents you with the opportunity to legalize and properly regulate e-cigarettes in the Philippines. This will provide the Filipino government with demonstrated decreases in health costs as well as increased tax revenue. **This will offer the Philippines increased flexibility regarding fiscal decisions**. E-cigarette legalization can also be expected to lessen the influence of criminal smugglers and gangs who profit from these products.

For the reasons presented above, the Tholos Foundation strongly encourages you to consider Senate Bill 2239 and the benefits of ending the prohibition on e-cigarettes in the Philippines. **All decisions concerning public health must be based upon scientific evidence and proven facts**. The science is clear, vaping offers people who smoke the greatest chance of quitting cigarettes while exposing them to significantly less harm than traditional cigarettes.

In the interests of public health, improving the Filipino economy, and reducing socioeconomic disparities, **we call upon you to consider SB 2239 and the millions of Filipino lives that would be saved if e-cigarettes were legalized in the Philippines.**

Sincerely,

Tim Andrews

Director of Consumer Issues

Tholos Foundation