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To:
Members of Thailand's National Assembly
1111 Samsen Road
Thanon Nakhon Chai Si
Dusit, Bangkok 10300

From:
Tholos Foundation
722 12th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Senators and Representatives,

On behalf of the Tholos Foundation, a non-profit organization which advocates in the interests of taxpayers and consumers across the globe, I encourage you to consider the scientific evidence supporting e-cigarettes as key tools of harm reduction when you review the legislative proposal to legalize and regulate e-cigarettes in Thailand.

There is overwhelming scientific evidence in favor of e-cigarettes as being safer than smoking and more effective at helping smokers quit than traditional nicotine replacements like gum, patches, or oral spray. E-cigarette legalization with responsible regulation will make it easier for Thailand's cigarette smokers to make the lifesaving switch to e-cigarettes.

The proposal can also be expected to strengthen the Thai economy and increase tourism. These benefits come in addition to the incredible health benefits that e-cigarettes have on smoking population. Each year, approximately 50,000 Thai people are [killed](#) by tobacco and smoking-related illnesses. E-cigarette legalization is a proven means of decreasing these avoidable deaths. The Tholos Foundation sends this letter to share scientific data, studies, and other relevant information that I hope will be valuable to you as you consider this legislation.

E-cigarettes are [shown](#) by the United Kingdom's Royal College of Physicians to be 95% less harmful than cigarettes and the most effective tool for smoking cessation. A separate, comprehensive analysis of the harm of different nicotine products estimated that e-cigarettes contain just 4% of the harm of [cigarettes](#). In agreement, [statements](#) in support 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.

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](#) 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.

E-cigarettes are products with lifesaving capabilities. According to a [study](#) 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](#) “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](#) 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 from this data, it can be estimated that legal access e-cigarettes in Thailand could save over 1,400,000 lives.

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 of achieving complete cessation compared to someone using a traditional nicotine replacement therapy like patches, gum, or oral spray.

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](#) has plummeted to 13.7% as of 2018. In the United Kingdom, a new [analysis](#) 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 proposed legalization on e-cigarettes in Thailand would allow for millions of people to use the best available products to end their deadly habit of smoking

I would also like to point out that scientific [studies](#) have shown that e-cigarettes 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.

A [study](#) from Dr. William Stephens of St. Andrews University, published in the British Medical Journal, showed that the risk of cancer from e-cigarettes, compared to that of smoking, is less than 0.5% percent. Increased access to e-cigarettes among people of lower income will come with decreased cigarette consumption. This will decrease cancer rates among these populations, many of whom would face financial or other obstacles to getting the medical care they need.

Additionally, there is scientific [evidence](#) 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.

A continued prohibition of vaping in Thailand will ensure that the underserved communities who benefit most from e-cigarette use cannot use the products. This will lead to disastrous consequences for public health throughout Thailand.

I would also like to note that prohibitions 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](#)”.

Illicit products also lack the regulation and safety standards of legal products. Legalized sales of e-cigarette will provide the Thai government with demonstrated decreases in health costs as well as increased tax revenue. This will offer great flexibility in regards to future fiscal decisions.

Another component of this proposal is the impact it will have on tobacco farmers in Thailand. Thai Digital Economy and Society Minister Chaiwut Thanakamanusorn [says](#) that this legislation will greatly benefit local tobacco growers and the Tobacco Authority of Thailand because it will create a more sustainable industry.

It should also be noted that Thai law enforcement’s [approach](#) to e-cigarettes has had significantly negative effects on tourism. Police often search vehicles for e-cigarettes and then use the products to extract fines from offenders. This is harmful policy, as it discourages Thai citizens from using reduced-risk products to quit smoking and prevents foreign tourists from traveling to Thailand due to fear. Legalizing e-cigarettes can be

expected to increase international tourism, which is a [critical](#) part of Thailand's economy, representing about 20% of all revenue and jobs as of 2019.

Finally, I would like to [highlight](#) the statements of top medical officials in the Philippines in regards to a proposal, much like Thailand's, that would legalize e-cigarettes. Dr. Dante Dator, former executive of the National Kidney and Transplant Institute, said the vape legalization bill is "our greatest chance" to end the smoking epidemic once and for all. Dr. Fernando Fernandez, secretary general of the Asia Pacific Dental Federation, said the bill is "definitely a big win for public health". Dr. Romeo Luna, a practicing surgeon, said the bill "is what we need to cut down smoking rates" and will "save countless lives." The proposal is wildly popular in the country, with 94% of Filipinos supporting policies that encourage adult smokers to switch to less harmful alternatives.

For the reasons outlined above, in the interests of public health and preventing the spread of smuggling cartels, we encourage you to use the evidence presented in this letter to inform your approach to the proposal to legalize e-cigarettes in Thailand. In doing so, Thailand can increase tax revenues, decrease healthcare costs, help tobacco farmers push for a more sustainable industry, all while saving hundreds of thousands of lives. The Tholos Foundation thanks you for your consideration of this highly important issue.

Sincerely,

Karl Abramson
Consumer Issues Fellow
Tholos Foundation