

National President and CEO  
Harold P. Wimmer

August 29, 2019

The Honorable Alex Azar II,  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

The American Lung Association is alarmed by the reports of 193 cases of lung disease and 1 death in 22 states linked to vaping, as reported by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on August 25. We support the efforts by the Department of Health and Human Services and local and state health departments to investigate this lung disease cluster. We are writing to request that the Department of Health and Human Services deliver a clear message to warn the public about the use of e-cigarettes.

On Wednesday, August 28, the City of Milwaukee Health Department urged “residents to stop using vaping products.” In July, in an open letter, acting Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Ned Sharpless, M.D., warned that “these products [e-cigarettes] are not safe.” And, earlier today at a press conference on the *U.S. Surgeon General’s Advisory: Marijuana Use and the Developing Brain*, Assistant Secretary for Health Admiral Brett P. Giroir, M.D., in response to a question on the vaping-related pulmonary illnesses, said, “the answer is don’t vape, vaping is dangerous for you both because of the drugs it puts in your system but also because of the direct lung injury it can cause.”

The American Lung Association agrees with the Milwaukee Health Department and Admiral Giroir: no one should use e-cigarettes. And we also agree with Commissioner Sharpless: e-cigarettes are not safe. These are clear, direct messages that the public needs to hear to protect against harm.

**Advocacy Office:**

1331 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 1425 North  
Washington, DC 20004-1710  
Ph: 202-785-3355 F: 202-452-1805

**Corporate Office:**

55 West Wacker Drive, Suite 1150 | Chicago, IL 60601  
Ph: 312-801-7630 F: 202-452-1805 info@Lung.org

We recognize that this public health crisis poses many challenges. The failure of the FDA to enforce the Tobacco Control Act and require Premarket Tobacco Applications for all e-cigarettes certainly has exacerbated this current health crisis. The lack of information about the myriad e-cigarette devices and assorted liquids and salts on the market can lead to misinformation and lack of awareness about the safety and health risks associated with e-cigarettes.

In 1854, Dr. John Snow famously took the handle off the Broad Street water pump to address a cholera outbreak. It was the most effective way to stop the public from drinking the contaminated water. It is vitally important that the public is told to stop using e-cigarettes.

We urge the Department of Health and Human Services to deliver a strong warning through all of your communication channels to stop vaping in order to help prevent additional harm from the use of these products.

The American Lung Association stands ready to amplify your message and assist in any way we can as you address this critical and urgent health issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harold Wimmer". The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light gray rectangular background.

Harold P. Wimmer  
National President and CEO

cc. ADM Brett Giroir, M.D., Assistant Secretary of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Robert Redfield, M.D., Director U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
VADM Jerome Adams, M.D., MPH, U.S. Surgeon General  
Norman E. "Ned" Sharpless, M.D. Acting Commissioner, U.S. Food and Drug Administration



