United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 14, 2014

Stephen B. Burke
Chief Executive Officer
NBC Universal
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, NY 10112

Dear Mr. Burke:

We write to express concern regarding the prominent display of electronic cigarettes at Sunday night's Golden Globe Awards.

Each year, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association recognizes excellence in film and television at the Golden Globe Awards. Throughout the country and the world, people tune in to watch fashionable actors on the red carpet, enjoy the show, and root for their favorite films and actors. Unfortunately, this year, many young viewers saw notable displays of e-cigarette use throughout the awards show, including the opening monologue and repeated shots of celebrities smoking e-cigarettes. In light of studies showing that exposure to on-screen smoking is a major contributor to smoking initiation among youth, we are troubled that these images glamorize smoking and serve as celebrity endorsements that could encourage young fans to begin smoking traditional cigarettes or e-cigarettes.

Electronic cigarettes, also called e-cigarettes, are battery-operated devices that simulate traditional tobacco cigarettes. E-cigarettes contain cartridges filled with flavors, chemicals, and the highly addictive substance, nicotine, which are vaporized and inhaled by the user. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), e-cigarette use is growing rapidly. Between 2010 and 2011, the number of U.S. adults who have tried e-cigarettes doubled.[1] Further, a CDC study released in September 2013 found that in just one year, from 2011 to 2012, the percentage of high school students who have ever used e-cigarettes more than doubled from 4.7 percent to 10 percent.[2]

In spite of the growing popularity of e-cigarettes and limited research on their long-term health effects and risk for increasing use of traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes are currently not required to be submitted to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for evaluation or approval. In 2009, FDA conducted a limited analysis of a sample of e-cigarettes. The analysis found significant quality control issues such as the presence of carcinogens and toxic chemicals, variation in the dose of nicotine in each inhalation, and the presence of nicotine in products

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[1] King BA, Alam S, Promoff G, Arrazola R, Dube SR. *Awareness and ever-use of electronic cigarettes among U.S. adults, 2010-2011.* Nicotine Tobacco Research. September 2013; 15(9):1623-7

[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *MMWR* Vol.62 No.35. September 6, 2013 pp.729-528

claiming to be nicotine-free.[3] The study raises concerns regarding the safety of these products, the levels of nicotine and other potentially harmful chemicals, and the marketing of e-cigarettes to children and teens.

Unlike traditional tobacco products, e-cigarettes can be legally sold to children and are currently not subject to federal age verification laws. E-cigarettes marketed to appeal to kids in candy and fruit flavors, like bubblegum and strawberry, are readily available to youth in shopping malls and online. These products risk addicting children to nicotine, which could be a pathway to cigarettes and other tobacco products.

The Golden Globes celebrates entertainers who are an influence on young fans. We ask the Hollywood Foreign Press Association and NBC Universal to take actions to ensure that future broadcasts of the Golden Globes do not intentionally feature images of e-cigarettes. Such action would help to avoid the glamorization of smoking and protect the health of young fans.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Richard J. Blumenthal
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

[3] http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/2009/ucm173222.htm