

NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

May 18, 2009

Senator Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy:

We are very pleased that the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions will next week undertake consideration of S. 982, the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, your legislation to give the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authority over tobacco products. On April 2nd, the House passed this legislation with a solid bipartisan vote of 298-112. We look forward to its passage by the Senate in the near future.

Tobacco-caused diseases remain the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S., killing more than 400,000 Americans each year and costing our health care system an estimated \$96 billion annually. More than 1,000 kids become regular, daily smokers each day – and one-third of them will ultimately die from their addiction. As you know, tobacco products are exempt from basic health regulations that apply to other consumer products such as drugs, medical devices and foods. It is time for this special protection to end.

The National Association of County and City Health Officials is one of more than 1,000 national, state and local organizations that support this legislation. We believe that this legislation will help prevent the next generation of young Americans avoid a deadly, life-long addiction to tobacco use. This legislation presents Congress with a truly historic opportunity to protect our children from tobacco addiction and save lives by addressing the nation's number one preventable cause of death.

We applaud your leadership on this important public health legislation and look forward to working with you to ensure its passage by the Senate.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Pestronk
Executive Director

