

Milwaukee Ald. Murphy: Sen. Johnson continues to lobby for vaping industry - at the expense of Wisconsin's children and young people

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Senator Johnson has publicly communicated to the President his opposition to plans by the Food and Drug Administration to restrict flavors and sales of e-cigarette vaping products, which have been tied to a surge in lung injuries and even deaths. This opposition to vaping restrictions is at odds with the latest in medical research and protecting the health of Wisconsin's children and youth.

In fact, more than 2,000 people who have used vaping products have been sickened and 39 have died, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Doctors at the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin were among the first to identify the severe negative effects of vaping products on the lungs of teens, and they are also now researching whether those suffering from suspected lung damage due to vaping - most are individuals between 15 and 23 years of age - will ever regain full, healthy lung function.

Additionally, researchers have identified a whole host of carcinogens, solvents, chemicals and other ingredients - including formaldehyde - in vaping products used by teens and others. According to the Milwaukee Health Department, Milwaukee residents are strongly encouraged to not utilize any vape and/or e-cigarette devices immediately, until their long term health effects are more fully understood.

In September the CEO of the American Lung Association stated: "E-cigarettes are

not safe and can cause irreversible lung damage and lung disease. No one should use e-cigarettes or any other tobacco product. This message is even more urgent today following the increasing reports of vaping-related illnesses and deaths nationwide. E-cigarettes contain chemicals harmful to lung health such as heavy metals, carcinogens, vegetable glycerin and propylene glycol. The developing lungs of youth may be more at risk, making what the Surgeon General refers to as a youth e-cigarette epidemic even more alarming.”

And according to a *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* piece published yesterday, Senator Johnson even goes against the FDA and other agencies that do not recommend vaping for cigarette smoking cessation. Johnson wrote a letter to President Trump dated Wednesday (November 13), in which he incorrectly claims that vaping is a “safer alternative to smoking” and insinuates that e-cigarette products are a safe and effective tool for smoking cessation. Even e-cigarette companies such as Juul do not endorse vaping as a tool for smoking cessation. Whose interests are Senator Johnson representing, the citizens of Wisconsin or big tobacco?

Dona Wininsky, the director of Tobacco Control & Public Policy for the American Lung Association in Wisconsin, said of Senator Johnson’s comments in the letter to the President: “Senator Johnson must put the health of Wisconsin’s children first, not the vaping industry. Almost 80 percent of kids acknowledge that they started vaping because of the flavors. These tobacco products are aimed at addicting kids, and none have been found to be safe or effective in helping smokers quit.”

I have been on the forefront of addressing e-cigarette use in the city of Milwaukee through public health legislation aimed at protecting residents from hazardous second-hand aerosol and keeping e-cigarettes out of the hands of youth. Additionally, it has been just over one year since the Common Council passed legislation to increase fines for those who sell tobacco to minors, prohibited the sale of e-cigarettes to minors, and prohibited the use of e-cigarettes on all properties where state law currently bans smoking.

The state of Wisconsin deserves elected representatives who act in the interest of their citizens, not corporate lobbying groups.