

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 18, 2020

André Calantzopoulos
Director and Chief Executive Officer
Philip Morris International, Inc.
120 Park Avenue #6
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Calantzopoulos:

We write regarding a recent study by public health experts at Stanford University that revealed that numerous tobacco companies - including several subsidiaries of Philip Morris International (PMI) – have “chosen to exploit a global pandemic for marketing purposes.” They have used the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic to unethically – and perhaps illegally - promote the sale of their tobacco and e-cigarette products, often on social media platforms primarily used by children and young adults.¹ Advertisements for vaping products have offered free gifts of scarce supplies – such as hand sanitizer, toilet paper, and masks, with the purchase of one of their products and have “profess[ed] the healthfulness of the company’s products” while pitching their “purported stress and anxiety relieving effects” during the pandemic.² This attempt to profit off the back of a global health crisis, reminiscent of decades of false and misleading advertising about cigarettes by tobacco companies, represents a callous indifference to the lives and well-being of millions of people across the world. To understand the scope of, and rationale for these abusive sales tactics we request information about your sales, research, and advertising since the pandemic began.

Since February 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc in communities across the world.³ To date, more than 71 million cases have been detected and nearly 2 million people have died across the globe. The United States alone has recorded more than 16.5 million cases, and nearly 300,000 Americans have been killed by the virus.⁴ Similar to the larger family of coronaviruses, COVID-19 is a disease that primarily affects the respiratory system. Symptoms can range from a cough or shortness of breath to pneumonia or acute respiratory distress syndrome, both of which can be deadly. The long-term effects of contracting COVID-19 are just now beginning to come to light.⁵

¹ Tobacco Control Journal, “Exploitation of the COVID-19 pandemic by e-cigarette marketers,” Robert K. Jackler, et al., August 27, 2020, <https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2020/08/26/tobaccocontrol-26020-055855>.

² *Id.*

³ World Health Organization, “Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic,” <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>.

⁴ Johns Hopkins University, “Coronavirus Resource Center,” <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/>.

⁵ Elsevier Public Health Emergency Collection, “COVID-19 pathophysiology: A review,” Koichi Yuki et al., April 20, 2020, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7169933/>; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,