

Life is too precious to go up in smoke



Jamaica Coalition for Tobacco Control

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Caribbean Public Health Association • Diabetes Association of Jamaica • Jamaica Cancer Society • Jamaica Dental Association
Nurses Association of Jamaica • The Heart Foundation of Jamaica • The Medical Association of Jamaica

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JCTC Fully Supports Enactment of Comprehensive Tobacco Control Legislation in Jamaica

SEPTEMBER 16, 2019 – KINGSTON, Jamaica - The Jamaica Coalition for Tobacco Control (JCTC) fully supports plans by the Ministry of Health and Wellness to enact comprehensive tobacco control legislation in Jamaica. Comprehensive legislation will among other things prohibit all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, sales of tobacco products to minors, and increase taxes on tobacco products, all of which will undoubtedly have a positive effect on the entire population.

This important legislation will protect Jamaicans, and in particular young people, from the harmful effects of tobacco. Tobacco use is the only risk factor common to the four main noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) - chronic respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and diabetes. According to the Pan American Health Organization Case for Investment in Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, reducing NCDs in Jamaica could save more than 5,700 lives, avoid labour productivity losses of J\$47.3 billion, and save J\$29.8 billion in medical illness treatment costs. Comprehensive tobacco legislation is therefore imperative to protecting Jamaicans from the ravages of tobacco use and second-hand smoke.

According to the 2017 Global Youth Tobacco Survey, more than 15.6% of Jamaican students 13-15 currently use tobacco products. In addition, more than 30% of students 13-15 have been exposed to tobacco advertisements or promotions at points of sale and 16.8% of students had something with tobacco brand logo in it. Tobacco advertising promotion and sponsorship encourages and influences youth to experiment with tobacco products and initiate regular use. The recent proliferation of billboards advertising tobacco products demonstrates a need for comprehensive legislation that will prohibit all forms of tobacco advertising promotion and sponsorship as voluntary self-regulation is a well-known tobacco industry pre-emptive tactic designed to weaken, impede or defeat tobacco control efforts.

It is also a fact that increasing cigarette prices is the most effective measure to reduce tobacco use among both young people and adults. An increase in tobacco taxes means that Jamaicans who might otherwise spend their discretionary income on cigarettes could spend those funds on other products which are subject to taxes, thereby mobilising additional revenue for the government.

Since 2005, Jamaica has been a signatory to the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), a treaty that reaffirms the right of all people to the highest standard of health. As a party to this convention, the Jamaican government is legally bound to implement the treaty's provisions. The JCTC applauds the Minister of Health and Wellness, Christopher Tufton, on his commitment to advancing the Public Health (Tobacco Control) Regulations 2013, via comprehensive tobacco control legislation in alignment with the FCTC, which would ensure that government honours its commitment to protecting the health and welfare of all Jamaicans.

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