



## HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center  
4400 West 18th Street • Houston, Texas 77092-8501

**Grenita F. Lathan, Ph.D.**  
*Interim Superintendent of Schools*

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December 3, 2019

The Honorable Carol Alvarado  
Texas State Senate  
P.O. Box 12068, Capitol Station  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Senator Alvarado:

Thank you for your letter regarding the emerging trend of youth vaping and e-cigarette use. In the Houston Independent School District, student safety and ensuring healthy learning spaces are of the utmost importance. Vaping is a public health concern and an issue in which we need the support of our parents, community, and elected officials to combat.

Changes to federal reporting requirements no longer require state education agencies to report data related to student tobacco use/possession. As such, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) eliminated the Disciplinary Action Code for tobacco-related violations before the start of the current school year. Because the now-eliminated code did not require school districts to record the type of tobacco product involved in disciplinary incidents, it's unclear how many of those tracked were related to e-cigarettes as opposed to cigarettes, chewing tobacco, or other tobacco products.

To raise awareness and promote prevention, HISD is observing Vaping Prevention Week this month (December 16-20), and in an effort to highlight the dangers and risks associated with vaping, campuses will be focusing on a different lesson each day, including:

- **Monday, December 16:** Campus staff will share HISD's [anti-vaping PSA](#) with students to start the conversation about prevention and awareness.
- **Tuesday, December 17:** Students will investigate the toxic ingredients contained in e-cigarettes and the short- and long-term side effects of each chemical on the human body.
- **Wednesday, December 18:** Exercise will include interviewing a trusted adult about their experiences and knowledge about vaping, and then students will share out with their peers about what they learned.
- **Thursday, December 19:** Students will create an eye-catching warning label for e-cigarettes with the goal of informing buyers about the reality and potential dangers of the product.
- **Friday, December 20:** Students will develop a "Your Life. Your Choice." action plan about how they will respond and make the smart choice regarding e-cigarettes.

Education is key to combating vaping and e-cigarette use. Although not required by the state, at least one half-credit of health education is required to graduate from HISD. As

part of the district's health education curriculum, students receive instruction on the dangers of tobacco and e-cigarette use through MD Anderson's A Smoking Prevention Interactive Experience (ASPIRE) program.

HISD's School Health Advisory Council will also be exploring other programs that can be used as an additional resource in the district's health education curriculum. Additionally, school nurses regularly receive continuing education about emerging tobacco products, such as e-cigarettes, to identify their use and educate students on the health risks involved. Tobacco and e-cigarette use are prohibited at all HISD schools and facilities, buses, playgrounds, and at athletic and after-school events. Students in possession of or found to be using vaping or e-cigarette devices are disciplined according to the [HISD Student Code of Conduct](#).

During Vaping Prevention Week, we are encouraging our schools to post photos, videos, and messages of support on social media using #SayNoToVaping and #HISDEmpowers. Our goal is to raise awareness and send a message that vaping and e-cigarettes are dangerous and pose risks to the health of our children. We hope you would consider joining us in our efforts to spread the word about HISD's anti-vaping campaign.

Thank you for your support, and please feel free to reach out if you have additional questions.  
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Grenita Lathan".

Grenita F. Lathan, Ph.D.  
Interim Superintendent

