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**Findings from Statewide Survey Show Disparity in
Availability of Healthy and Unhealthy Products in Kern County**

Bakersfield, CA – March 8, 2017 – A new study shows the availability of e-cigarettes in Kern County has grown 19.8% since 2013. These findings are part of research released today on the availability and marketing of tobacco products, alcohol, and healthy as well as unhealthy food options in California stores that sell tobacco.

The study released today builds upon initial research released three years ago in March 2014 and provides insights to changes in the availability and marketing of these products. Information was collected in the summer of 2016 from more than 7,100 stores in all 58 California counties including pharmacies, supermarkets, delis, convenience and liquor stores, as well as tobacco-only stores. In Kern County, a random sample of 346 stores were surveyed in Arvin, Bakersfield, Ridgecrest, Delano, Shafter, Taft, California City, Frazier Park, Lebec, and Boron.

“Overall, the findings show a continuing and alarming discrepancy in our county in the accessibility and marketing between products that promote a healthy lifestyle and those that don’t,” said Brynn Carrigan, Assistant Director of Public Health. “Stores play a critical role in our community’s health, and this survey indicates a disparity between health and unhealthy choices, tipping heavily toward unhealthy options. Our goal is to help re-calibrate the balance toward healthy choices.”

Specifically, the survey found the following for Kern County:

- In addition to selling cigarettes, 86.6% of stores sell “little cigars” or cigarillos, but only 43.8% of stores sold fresh fruits or vegetables. What’s more, 93.1% of stores sold a popular brand of “little cigars” individually for under a dollar, less than the cost of a candy bar.
- While only 27.6% of stores sold non- or low-fat milk, nearly 78.8% sell alcohol. E-cigarette availability saw a significant increase in Kern County stores from the previous survey, from 42.0% in 2013 to 61.8% in 2016.

“This survey found that our community’s youth are inundated with unhealthy messaging and choices,” said Brynn Carrigan. “We need to change what our kids are exposed to and surround them with healthy choices and messaging instead.” Only 11.3% of Kern County stores surveyed advertised healthy products on their storefronts, while 69.3% of storefronts advertised unhealthy products. 76.9% of stores near schools have storefront advertising for unhealthy products.

Another aspect included in the survey was unhealthy products and product advertisement placed three feet or below, which is considered 'kid-friendly'. More than 26.5% of Kern County stores in the survey placed tobacco products or ads at 'kid-level' or near candy or toys. More than 27.8% of stores placed alcohol ads at 'kid-level' or near candy or toys. 86.9% of Kern County stores surveyed sold flavored non-cigarette tobacco products, which often have kid-appealing flavors, such as grape, watermelon, chocolate, gummy candies and even breakfast cereals. Similarly, 84.6% of stores near schools also sold flavored tobacco products.

Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community is a statewide campaign formed by tobacco prevention, nutrition, alcohol abuse prevention, and Sexually Transmissible Diseases prevention partners collaborating to improve the health of Californians by informing them about the impact of unhealthy product availability and marketing in the retail environment.

For state and county-specific data and more information on Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community, please visit www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com.

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