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NEW SURVEY SHOWS SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY NEEDS A BETTER BALANCE OF HEALTHY AND ACCESSIBLE PRODUCTS IN STORES THAT HELP MAKE THE HEALTHY CHOICE THE EASY CHOICE

VICTORVILLE, CA – June 2020 – New research shows that in San Bernardino County the availability of single little cigars/cigarillos has increased from 45% in 2016 to 51% in 2019 among surveyed stores. This finding is part of new research released today on the availability and marketing of tobacco products, alcohol, condoms and healthy and unhealthy food options in California stores that sell tobacco.

The Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community (HSHC) Survey is the largest scientific survey of its kind in the state and builds upon previous research released in 2014 and 2017 to look at changes in the availability and marketing of the studied products over time. Information collected from nearly 8,000 randomly selected licensed tobacco retailers in all 58 California counties included convenience, gas, grocery, liquor, and drug, as well as tobacco stores.

One of the key goals of the survey was to examine the accessibility and marketing of healthy and unhealthy products to youth. In San Bernardino County, 29% of surveyed stores still have tobacco marketing in kid-friendly locations, such as near candy or toys or under three feet.

"The findings show that while we have made some progress in combatting tobacco, our community's youth are still surrounded by unhealthy choices and messages in the retail environment," said Josiah Bruny, Chairperson, Coalition for a Tobacco-Free San Bernardino County. "Tobacco advertising shouldn't be somewhere that's meant to be seen by kids. Overall, we need a better balance of healthy choices in our stores. This information is important to examine because the three leading causes of death in California are from heart disease, cancer and stroke, which can all largely be prevented by eliminating tobacco use, limiting alcohol use, eating healthy and being physically active."

The survey found the following for San Bernardino County:

- 87% of stores surveyed sell flavored, non-cigarette tobacco products such as grape e-cigarettes, and this is an increase since 2016 when 86% sold them. A majority of stores (91%) also sold menthol cigarettes.
- The vast majority of stores sold little cigars/cigarillos (83%) or chewing tobacco (54%). These widely available products come in hundreds of enticing flavors and can be sold individually – making them very appealing to youth.
- More stores in San Bernardino County sold flavored tobacco products such as e-cigarettes, little cigars and chew, (87%) than fresh fruits and vegetables (53%) when surveyed.
- 39% of surveyed stores in San Bernardino County sold sugary drinks at the check-out counter. California teens consume the equivalent of 39 pounds of sugar each year from sugary drinks.

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- The vast majority of surveyed stores that sold alcohol also sold alcopops (89%). These are alcoholic beverages that come in sweet and fruity flavors that can be appealing to kids.
 - 84% of surveyed stores sold condoms, but only 35% sold them on unlocked shelves where people don't have to worry about being embarrassed by asking a clerk to access them. This is important because in California in 2018, bacterial STDs (chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis) significantly increased.

"The growing availability of flavored tobacco products are of particular concern as four out of five youth who have used tobacco started with a flavored product. Flavors are the tobacco industry's recruitment tool to hook new customers," said Monika Gracian, Program Manager, California Health Collaborative - San Bernardino County Tobacco Control Program. "The California Health Collaborative - San Bernardino County Tobacco Control Program is committed to continuing to work with local health advocates and partners to provide accurate information and help make the healthy choice the easy choice for San Bernardino County residents. We have an important opportunity, now, to make sure our stores offer healthier options."

The Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community campaign is a statewide collaboration between tobacco and alcohol use prevention, sexually transmitted disease prevention, and nutrition partners to examine what's in our community stores and how that impacts public health.

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

The California Health Collaborative (CHC) is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization committed to enhancing the quality of life and health of the people of California, particularly the underserved and underrepresented. Guided by its mission of "changing lives by improving health and wellness," CHC implements an array of health promotion and disease prevention programs, public health surveillance systems, and a variety of capacity-building and networking initiatives. For more information, visit www.healthcollaborative.org