



June 6, 2022

Wilmot Reed Hastings, Jr. and Theodore Sarandos, Jr., Co-CEOs
Netflix, Inc.
100 Winchester Circle
Los Gatos, CA 95032

Dear Mr. Hastings and Mr. Sarandos:

With the premiere of the latest season of *Stranger Things*, the undersigned organizations and individuals write today to urge Netflix to follow its pledge to keep tobacco imagery out of youth-appealing streaming content. While we have appreciated Netflix's statements in the press pledging that future youth-oriented and youth-appealing content would be free of tobacco imagery, we have been disappointed in the implementation of that pledge and still have not seen a written company policy.

Decades of research on smoking in the movies has shown that onscreen tobacco imagery recruits youth to tobacco use. As the Surgeon General's Report on Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults reported, exposure to onscreen smoking in movies is causally related to youth smoking initiation. Since that report, additional research has found that tobacco use on screen directly contributes to e-cigarette use among youth – and is contributing to the youth e-cigarette epidemic. Specifically, a 2020 study established a link between smoking imagery and e-cigarette use among youth. That study found that exposure to tobacco imagery through episodic programming can triple a young person's odds of starting to vape.

A recent [Truth Initiative report](#) showed that while Netflix made small inroads in 2020 toward reducing tobacco imagery and even eliminating it from some shows, such as *13 Reasons Why* and *Fuller House*, Netflix remained the company with the most tobacco depictions in programming aimed at youth. In fact, 2020 was the fourth year in a row that Netflix was the top offender in terms of tobacco depictions – and this in a year where the usual show with the

most tobacco depictions, *Stranger Things* did not have a 2020 season. Further, some shows such as *Umbrella Academy* actually increased the amount of tobacco they showed. In that show, tobacco was seen in every episode in its 2020 season – a tripling of tobacco depictions from the previous season. *The Queen's Gambit* also contained tobacco depictions in every episode. Most recently, in the just-released season of *Stranger Things*, in the first two episodes alone there are 38 tobacco incidences, including one cigarette brand name representation. This is not the progress we were hoping for with regard to Netflix reducing tobacco incidences in youth-appealing programming.

Given the mixed progress that Netflix has made toward removing tobacco depictions from its youth-oriented programming, our coalition is reaching out to Netflix to work together to eliminate tobacco in its shows with substantial youth audience. To that end we respectfully request the following:

1. While we have seen statements in the press pledging to remove tobacco from youth-rated shows, we have not seen a written policy from Netflix. Please provide that and disclose the policy on the company's website.
2. Meet with coalition representatives to discuss in more detail the impact Netflix's shows have on youth tobacco and nicotine use, how Netflix implements the aforementioned policy, and determine ways we can work together to eliminate tobacco from youth-oriented programming.

We look forward to working with you to protect our nation's youth and provide entertaining content free from tobacco and nicotine depictions. Stacey Gagosian, Managing Director of Public Policy at Truth Initiative (sgagosian@truthinitiative.org) will be reaching out to schedule a time for our coalition representatives to meet with you. Please feel free to reach out to her if you need additional information or have questions.

Sincerely,

ORGANIZATIONS

Action on Smoking and Health
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights
Breathe California Sacramento Region
BC Alliance for Health Living
Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids
CommonSpirit Health
Poway Unified School District
Public Health Law Center
Seventh Generation Interfaith Coalition for Responsible Investment
San Diego County Office of Education
Tobacco Free Portfolios

Trinity Health
Truth Initiative
UCSF Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education

INDIVIDUALS

Stanton A. Glantz, PhD
Professor of Medicine and Founding Director, UCSF Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education (retired)
Founding Director, Smokefree Movies/Smokefree Media

Cheryl Healton, MPA, DrPH
Dean
School of Global Health, New York University

James Sargent, MD
Professor of Pediatrics
Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth

James Thrasher, PhD
Professor, Department of Health Promotion, Education & Behavior
Arnold School of Public Health, University of South Carolina, Columbia

CC: Ruchi Bhowmik, VP Public Policy, Netflix
William Guidera, Director, US Federal and State Public Affairs, Netflix