

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 10, 2014

Martin J. Barrington, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Altria Group, Inc.
Nicandro Durante, Chief Executive, British American Tobacco PLC
Ling Chengqing, China National Tobacco
Alison Cooper, Chief Executive, Imperial Tobacco Group PLC
Pierre de Labouchere, President and Chief Executive Officer, Japan Tobacco Inc.
Murray S. Kessler, Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer, Lorillard, Inc.
André Calantzopoulos, Chief Executive Officer, Philip Morris International Inc.
Daniel M. Delen, President and Chief Executive Officer, Reynolds American Inc.
J. Pieter Sikkel, President and Chief Executive Officer, Alliance One International, Inc.
George C. Freeman III, Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer, Universal Corporation

Dear Sirs and Madam:

We are deeply concerned about the dangers of nicotine exposure to children who work on U.S. tobacco farms, as well as other health and safety risks posed to child tobacco workers. We write to urge your companies to adopt company policies and industry-wide standards to prevent children under age 18 from working in direct contact with tobacco and to ensure that these standards apply throughout your supply chain.

A new study released by Human Rights Watch, based on interviews with 141 child tobacco workers in the four largest tobacco-producing states (North Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee), found that nearly three-quarters of the child tobacco workers they interviewed had experienced the sudden onset of serious symptoms—including nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, headaches, dizziness, difficulty breathing, skin rashes, and irritation to their eyes and mouths—while working in fields of tobacco plants and in curing barns. Many of these symptoms are consistent with acute nicotine poisoning.

As you know, acute nicotine poisoning, known as Green Tobacco Sickness, is an occupational health risk specific to tobacco farming that occurs when workers absorb nicotine through their skin from prolonged contact with tobacco plants. Public health research has found that non-smoking adult tobacco workers have similar levels of nicotine in their bodies as smokers in the general population. Occupational exposure can be dangerous for adult workers, but even more dangerous for children whose bodies are still developing and are even more vulnerable to exposure. Studies highlighted by a 2014 report from the Surgeon General found that nicotine exposure during adolescence may have long-term adverse consequences for brain development.

While protective equipment such as rain suits may limit nicotine exposure, they are not a practical solution for children, as they carry other unacceptable risks, including heat stroke and other heat-related illnesses from working in the high temperatures that are typical during the tobacco season in the United States.

Human Rights Watch found children as young as 7 working in U.S. tobacco fields, and children of ages 11 and 12 working 10-12 hours per day or more. These children described working in extreme heat, using sharp tools and heavy machinery, and working at heights of more than one story in curing barns. More than half of the children interviewed reported being exposed to toxic pesticides. Public health experts have noted that several pesticides commonly used during tobacco farming are known neurotoxins, which can cause cancer, depression, neurologic deficits, and reproductive health problems.

We urge your companies to develop company policies and industry-wide standards that would include the following:

- a prohibition on child labor anywhere in the tobacco supply chain, including any work in which children under age 18 come in direct contact with tobacco plants or dried tobacco leaves, including in countries where national laws provide lesser protections;
- provisions in all contracts with growers and suppliers that child labor is prohibited, including work by children under age 18 that brings them in direct contact with tobacco;
- provisions stipulating qualified third-party monitors to conduct regular inspections of suppliers during peak season when children are most likely to work, and ensure that their reports are made public.”
- support for programs to prevent child labor in tobacco, including programs to support educational, recreational, and alternative skills building and vocational opportunities.

6.7 million tons of tobacco are produced around the world each year, with the U.S. as the fourth-largest producer. Approximately 5.8 trillion cigarettes are consumed annually. These products should not be produced at the expense of children's health. We note that other major tobacco-producing countries, including India and Brazil, prohibit children under age 18 from working in tobacco.

We urge you, as the world's leading tobacco companies and tobacco leaf merchants, to take the steps outlined above to ensure that all children are protected from nicotine poisoning and other health hazards in tobacco production.

Sincerely,



Senator Tom Harkin



Senator Sherrod Brown



Senator Bernard Sanders



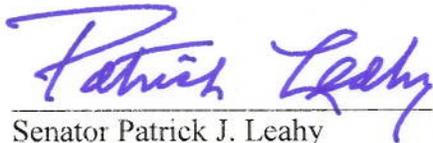
Senator Brian Schatz



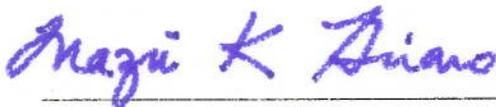
Senator Richard J. Durbin



Senator Richard Blumenthal



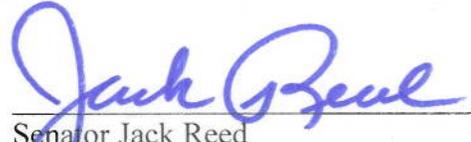
Senator Patrick J. Leahy



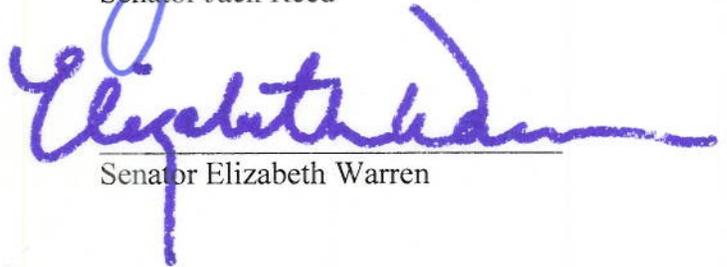
Senator Mazie K. Hirono



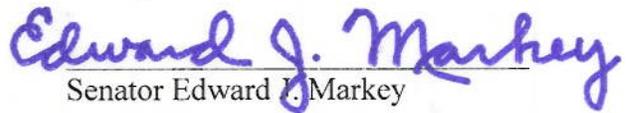
Senator Jeffrey A. Merkley



Senator Jack Reed



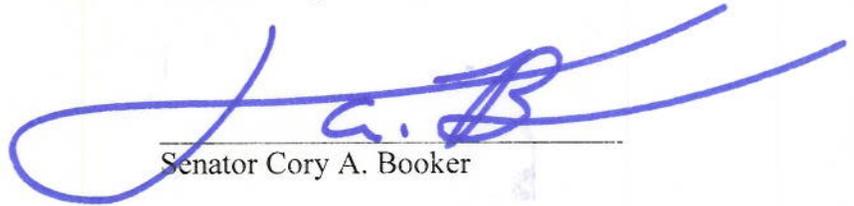
Senator Elizabeth Warren



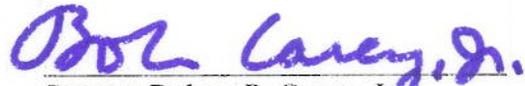
Senator Edward J. Markey



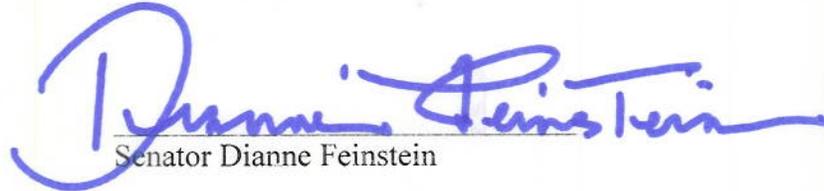
Senator Benjamin L. Cardin



Senator Cory A. Booker



Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.



Senator Dianne Feinstein



Senator Kirsten Gillibrand