**Invitation to Join Coalition for a Smoke-Free Tomorrow**

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December 17,  2018

Dr. Randy Poe, Superintendent

Boone County Schools

8330 U.S. 42

Florence, KY 41042

Dear Randy,

We are writing to invite Boone County Schools to join the Coalition for a Smoke-Free Tomorrow ([www.smokefreetomorrow.org](http://www.smokefreetomorrow.org)), which comprises nearly 170 organizations across the state that are committed to improving the health of Kentucky by reducing smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke. There is no cost to join the Coalition; just a willingness to lend your district’s name in support of evidence-based measures that will reduce the health, workforce and taxpayer costs of tobacco use in Kentucky.

Coalition members and partners include education institutions and associations – including the Kentucky School Boards Association – health advocacy organizations, health care providers and payers, faith-based organizations, and businesses. We all recognize the damage that smoking and e-cigarette use causes in the Commonwealth, and we invite you to stand with us as we support common sense measures that are proven to reduce tobacco use, especially among youth, pregnant moms and low-income populations. We are particularly concerned about the explosive growth in teen e-cigarette use, which has reached epidemic levels, and teens’ lack of awareness regarding the health dangers of these tobacco products. Research shows e-cigarettes are a gateway to smoking combustible cigarettes for teens. The Coalition is exploring policy options to prevent hooking another generation on tobacco through e-cigarettes, which could reverse decades of decline in smoking.

In 2019, the Coalition will advocate for a statewide “Tobacco Free for Students” law that will reduce peer pressure to use tobacco during school hours and events, and help create an educational environment where tobacco use is not the norm. Currently, just 57 percent of Kentucky’s public school students are protected by such policies.

The Coalition also will be asking legislators to increase funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs provided by public health departments in Kentucky in 2019.

The Coalition is managed by a steering committee (see left column), which determines our goals and priorities. We hope your district will join us in this important work to reduce tobacco-related illness and costs in the Commonwealth:

* Kentucky is the *Cancer Capital of the Nation*. We have the highest rates of both cancer incidence and cancer mortality. And more cancers in Kentucky are caused by smoking than anywhere else in the nation.

* Nearly 9,000 Kentuckians die every year from smoking-related diseases.

* If we do not reduce youth smoking, 119,000 Kentucky kids now younger than 18 will die prematurely.

* Smoking-related health care expenditures in the Commonwealth total $1.92 billion each year; nearly $590 million of those costs are covered by Medicaid. On average, each household in Kentucky pays $1,168 of that cost.

* Lost worker productivity due to smoking in Kentucky is estimated at $2.79 billion annually, and the cost to businesses is an estimated $5,816 per-employee each year.

It’s easy to join the Coalition, and as noted above, there is no cost.  Just visit the Coalition website at [www.smokefreetomorrow.org/what-can-i-do](http://www.smokefreetomorrow.org/what-can-i-do) to sign up online so we can add your department to our website. You will find a [list there of responsibilities and benefits](https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/120724_f07ece81902849eebe626cbf74aa8ac4.pdf) of joining as well.

Please contact either of us, or the Coalition’s staff lead, Bonnie Hackbarth, at 502-326-2583 if you have any questions.

In support of a healthier Kentucky,

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Kerri Schelling, CAE                                                                   Ben Chandler

Executive Director                                                                     Chair, Coalition for a Smoke-Free Tomorrow

Kentucky School Boards Association                                      President/CEO, Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky (Coalition Coordinating Partner)

P.S. The Coalition for a Smoke-Free Tomorrow will be hosting a [news conference and rally](https://www.smokefreetomorrow.org/upcoming-events) in the Capitol Rotunda on January 22, 2019, at 10:00 AM to launch our Tobacco-Free Schools Campaign.  We invite encourage you to attend this event and share this invitation with your contacts.

Alexa Kerley

External Affairs Assistant

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