

**October 5, 2020**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL URGES CREATIVE COMMUNITY TO PROTECT YOUNG VIEWERS FROM TOBACCO IMAGERY**

**Chicago** — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today joined a coalition of 43 attorneys general in urging the creative community to take action to protect young viewers from tobacco imagery in streamed movies and programs. Raoul and the coalition directed letters to five creative guilds as part of an ongoing effort to reduce youth exposure to tobacco.

"I am committed to protecting young people from the harmful effects of tobacco use, and limiting their exposure to tobacco use in movies and television is one step we can take," Raoul said. "I encourage the industry to do the responsible thing and limit tobacco use in their video content."

Tobacco is the number one preventable killer in the United States, with over 480,000 Americans dying from tobacco-related diseases every year. A growing body of evidence indicates that vaping can permanently damage lungs and lead to a lifetime of tobacco and nicotine use.

In the race to launch new platforms, provide more content, and capture audiences, many streaming companies failed to consider the impact that easy access to movies and programs with tobacco imagery would have on children. In 2012, following a decade of studies, the Surgeon General concluded that "[t]here is a causal relationship between depictions of smoking in the movies and the initiation of smoking among young people." More recently, a study by the Truth Initiative found that children who watch episodic programs with tobacco content are significantly more likely to begin vaping than those who are not exposed to such content. Even those with low levels of exposure were more than twice as likely to start using e-cigarettes, and those with high exposure were over three times more likely.

In today's letters, Raoul and the coalition urge the Directors Guild of America, Producers Guild of America, Screenwriters Guild of America, Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees to use their collective influence to persuade members of the creative community to depict tobacco imagery more responsibly and to encourage streaming companies to:

- Adopt best practices that steer young viewers away from content with tobacco imagery, including excluding tobacco imagery in future content targeting children.
- Only recommend and promote tobacco-free titles for children and families.
- Mitigate the historic and cumulative impact of watching tobacco imagery by running strong anti-tobacco spots, especially before content with smoking or vaping.
- Display prominent and forceful tobacco warnings before content with tobacco imagery.
- Offer effective parental controls, so families may be empowered to choose smoke-free content.

Joining Raoul in the letters are the attorneys general of Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, the Northern Mariana Islands, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.