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Shareholders Challenge Major Hollywood Studios to Account for 1,000,000 Smoking Deaths

Surgeon General and CDC Directly Link Smoking in Movies to Youth Initiation that Could be Eliminated with an R Rating

Milwaukee, WI – Today faith-based shareholders, who are part of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) and the shareholder advocacy organization As You Sow, filed shareholder resolutions with The Walt Disney Company and Viacom (parent of Paramount) asking the Hollywood movie studios to respond to the Surgeon General and CDC report that an R rating of films with smoking imagery could save 1,000,000 lives.

The landmark 2012 US Surgeon General report, Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults concluded, “There is a causal relationship between depictions of smoking in the movies and the initiation of smoking among young people... An MPAA policy to give films with smoking an adult (R) rating...could eliminate...and reduce the exposure of youth to smoking in movies.”

Based on the Surgeon General’s report, in 2014 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concluded: “Giving an R rating to movies with smoking would be expected to reduce the number of teen smokers by nearly one in five (18%) and prevent one million deaths from smoking among children alive today.” The CDC also concluded: “The data show that individual movie company policies alone have not been shown to be efficient at minimizing smoking in movies. Studios with policies have had more tobacco incidents in 2013 than 2010.”

Similar shareholder resolutions will also be filed with four other major Hollywood movie studios over the coming year to address what shareholder proponents consider to be a systemic problem that is a significant public health issue. “For over 15 years we have been working with the major studio to act on this issue and the problem is not going away,” said Rev. Michael Crosby, the Tobacco Issue coordinator for ICCR, lead filer with Viacom/Paramount representing the Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order. “In 2012, the Surgeon General showed the causal link between smoking in G/PG/PG13 movies and smoking initiation leading to a lifetime of addiction. The report called for an ‘R’ rating for movies with smoking. Now the Centers for Disease Control has concurred, stating that this action could save 1,000,000 lives - yet the movie companies are not responding adequately.”

Sr. Nora Nash, representing The Franciscan Sisters of Philadelphia, the lead filing group for Disney, noted that the issue of smoking in youth rated films produced and distributed by Disney was first raised in 1997. “We think we’ve given the movie studios enough time to make public health the hallmark of their policies aimed to reduce or eliminate smoking in movies.” Tom McCaney, Associate Director, added, “While many



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Disney-branded films have little or no smoking, the company distributes films that continue to promote smoking initiation among teens, and since 2011, the company’s PG-13 movies have delivered an average of 2.6 billion tobacco impressions, the second highest among all MPAA-member companies.”

Smoking tobacco is the leading cause of preventable deaths in the United States and data shows that, apart from parental smoking and peer pressure, smoking and tobacco imagery in youth-friendly movies is the biggest contributor to initiation of smoking among youth. “Shareholders also requested that Disney and Viacom report to shareholders the attributable number of smoking deaths from its films,” said Andrew Behar, CEO of As You Sow. “I agree with the 38 State Attorneys who said that given the scientific evidence the film industry cannot justify failing to eliminate smoking from youth-rated movies. Each time another movie is released that depicts smoking, it’s done with the full knowledge of the harm it will bring children who watch it.”

The ICCR shareholders and As You Sow representatives have had regular dialogues with all the major movie studios for well-over a decade. These have contributed to the creation of policies and procedures aimed to curb tobacco portrayals in youth-friendly movies. “Unfortunately,” Crosby concluded, “the problem persists. Since this is an industry-wide problem that has not been resolved by the MPAA, we need to go ask our fellow shareholders to send a strong message to the studios that this is not just a public health issue; it’s a basic moral issue as well.”

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As You Sow is a nonprofit organization that promotes environmental and social corporate responsibility through shareholder advocacy, coalition building, and innovative legal strategies. For more information visit www.asyousow.org.

The Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility is a coalition of 300 faith-based institutions using their estimated \$200 billion to further their environmental, social and governance values. For more information visit www.iccr.org.

CHE Trinity Health is the second-largest Catholic health care delivery system in the nation. It serves people and communities in 20 states from coast to coast with 82 hospitals, 88 continuing care facilities and home health and hospice programs that provide more than 2.3 million visits annually. It was formed in May 2013, when Trinity Health and Catholic Health East completed their consolidation to strengthen their shared mission, increase excellence in care and advance transformative efforts with their unified voice. For more information, visit either www.trinity-health.org, www.che.org or www.newhealthministry.org.

The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia - Consistent with our mission and values, The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia have social as well as financial objectives for the return on investments. We collaborate with other faith-based investors in realizing our responsibilities for environmental, social and governance issues that affect our local community and communities around the globe. We focus on responsible investing that includes principled purchasing (screens) and active ownership strategies: proxy voting, dialogues, letter writing and shareholder resolutions. We promote the common good by investing in community development organizations that share responsibility for empowering individuals and helping communities to be sustainable. Visit us at www.osfphila.org.