

Disney Takes Important Step Towards Eliminating Smoking from Youth-Rated Movies

After pressure from investors, studio prohibits smoking depictions in Disney-produced films with G, PG, and PG-13 Ratings

OAKLAND, CA – July 14, 2015 – The Walt Disney Company has become the first major Hollywood studio to prohibit cigarette smoking depictions in films they produce with youth ratings. The company's new policy will limit smoking depictions to films with an R rating, a move the U.S. Surgeon General has said could save the lives of over 1,000,000 children if the entire industry followed suit. The new policy covers all films that Disney produces, but disappointingly does not extend to films the company distributes.

"Disney is showing their leadership by taking action on the Surgeon General and CDC report, implementing a policy with direct impact on this public health crisis," said Andrew Behar, CEO of environmental health advocacy non-profit As You Sow. "The next step should be to publicly endorse an MPAA policy to require an R rating for all films depicting smoking."

"We are extending our policy to prohibit smoking in movies across the board, [to] Marvel, Lucas, Pixar, [and] Disney films," said Disney CEO Robert Iger, responding to shareholders at Disney's annual meeting on March 12. "In terms of any new characters that are created under any of those labels we would absolutely prohibit smoking in any of those films," Iger added later.

In 2012, the US Surgeon General concluded, "There is a causal relationship between depictions of smoking in the movies and the initiation of smoking among young people." In 2015, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 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."

"Consistent with health authorities, Disney's policy exempts smoking for depictions of historical figures, and for negative portrayal of smoking," said Tom McCaney, Associate Director of Corporate Social Responsibility at The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. "But, seemingly contrary to Mr. Iger's commitment, Disney's policy does not extend to movies Disney distributes under its Touchstone brand; we hope the company closes this loophole and also extends the policy to all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, which is important as youth tobacco use changes."

A coalition of investors, including As You Sow and faith-based shareholders Trinity Health and Sisters of St. Francis (part of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility) have engaged with Disney and other studios on the issue of tobacco impressions in films for over a decade.

"We commend Disney for this historic move," said Rev. Michael Crosby, Tobacco Issue Coordinator for ICCR. "However, this is still an industry-wide problem that has not been resolved by the MPAA. The CDC demonstrated that the R rating for kid-rated movies could save 1,000,000 lives. Disney is part of the solution, but 88% of youth-rated films are not made by Disney."

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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.

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