NEWS RELEASE
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Seattle Public Schools Files Suit Against Juul
District seeks prevention funding, end to company’s youth marketing

SEATTLE – Calling it an “urgent matter for the health and well-being of our students,” Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Denise Juneau today announced that the school district is filing a lawsuit against Juul Labs, Inc., the electronic cigarette company that manufactures, distributes and sells cigarette alternatives commonly known as vaporizers, vape pens or e-cigarettes.

In addition to filing suit against Juul, SPS is also filing against Altria Group, Inc. (parent company of Philip Morris), which owns a 35 percent stake in Juul, and Eonsmoke, LLC, which markets Juul-compatible products and has initiated youth-oriented social media campaigns such as “Doit4juul.”

The lawsuit alleges that Juul’s advertising and product design deliberately targets minors and has contributed to a dramatic increase in youth vaping and youth nicotine addiction.

“There is no doubt that vaping is reaching epidemic proportions among teenagers, and we can’t just sit by while our students suffer the effects of being targeted by Juul,” said the Superintendent.

The lawsuit was filed today in the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington in Seattle, but will likely be transferred and consolidated into the multi-district litigation pending in San Francisco before Judge William Orrick III.

SPS is represented by lawyers from Keller Rohrback, a firm that specializes in representing public entities in high-impact cases involving public health, consumer protection, and the environment. The firm also represents other public entities in litigation against Juul, including King County.

Greg Narver, SPS Chief Legal Counsel, will serve as co-counsel on the SPS case, as Keller Rohrback attorneys will work with the SPS in-house legal team.

The lawsuit asks, among other relief, that the court order Juul to cease marketing its addictive product to minors, and for damages and funding for district prevention education and addiction treatment.
“Our number one priority is to deliver a world-class education to all our students, and the teen vaping epidemic is a huge barrier to that mission,” said SPS Board of Directors President Leslie Harris. “This suit is the appropriate response because companies that market addictive products to children need to be stopped.”

The most recent Washington State Healthy Youth Survey showed an increase in vaping among students from sixth through 12th grade.

From 2016 to 2018, there was a 250 percent increase in the number of 10th grade students who reported vaping within the past 30 days.

“Vaping in any form is not safe, and Juul – largely through its marketing efforts – has had a huge impact on the increases in young people who vape,” said Lisa Davidson, SPS Manager of Prevention and Intervention. “Along with educating our school community, it is important to also directly address Juul’s predatory marketing practices through this suit.”

Davidson says the rise in youth vaping has led her team to increase education and prevention efforts with Seattle Public Schools students, staff, families, and community partners.

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