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May 6, 2019

The Honorable Edward Markey
The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Markey, Senator Blumenthal and Senator Van Hollen:

I am writing to respond to your letter dated April 15, 2019 to Bob Bakish, President and CEO, Viacom Inc. ("Viacom"). Viacom shares your concern about the serious health risks associated with tobacco use and appreciates your interest in understanding the role the entertainment industry plays in preventing such use by youth.

Viacom creates some of the most popular film, television and digital entertainment through iconic brands like Nickelodeon, Nick Jr., MTV, VH1, BET, Comedy Central and Paramount Pictures ("Paramount"). Consistent with a long tradition of corporate social responsibility, Viacom developed tobacco policies designed to eliminate paid tobacco promotions for all audiences and to minimize tobacco depictions for youth audiences. Specifically, Viacom does not permit advertising, product placement, "tie-ins" or other paid promotion of tobacco (cigarettes, little cigars and smokeless tobacco) in any of its film, television or digital entertainment, regardless of rating. Viacom does not accept consideration of any kind in exchange for depictions of tobacco.

Viacom also discourages tobacco use in youth-rated films (G, PG, PG-13) and youth-rated television programs (TV-Y, TV-Y7, TV-G, TV-PG, TV-14). In implementing this policy, Viacom takes into account the creative vision of filmmakers and television producers, while balancing responsible depiction of tobacco use. For example, there may be instances where the depiction of tobacco use is appropriate for the story being told, such as to portray accurately a historical figure or time period. Viacom's ability to influence the content of a film or television program is necessarily limited when it is acting as a distributor on behalf of a third party, or lacks editorial control.

At Paramount, if a youth-rated film does contain a depiction of tobacco or tobacco-related products, the end credits of the film include the following notice: “Paramount Pictures Corporation did not receive any payment or other consideration, or enter into any agreement, for the depiction of tobacco products in this film”.¹ Paramount also includes an anti-smoking public service announcement produced by the California Health and Human Services Agency on all domestic DVDs for such films.

In recent years, Viacom has aired thousands of anti-smoking television ads from the Truth Campaign, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. From 2015-2018, Viacom and the Truth Campaign created custom spots highlighting the dangers of smoking for the MTV Video Music Awards.

Viacom has also incorporated anti-smoking themes into some of its youth-oriented television programs. In 2018, the company again collaborated with the Truth Campaign to create a custom episode of MTV’s *Decoded* series, focusing on systemic targeting of rural, low-income communities by Big Tobacco. Viacom continues to work with anti-smoking groups to develop diverse, custom marketing campaigns, and plans to bring one such campaign to its 2019 VidCon festival.

Viacom regularly reviews the implementation and effectiveness of its tobacco policies and may revise them as appropriate. The company welcomes your inquiry and interest in this important area.

Sincerely,



DeDe Lea
Executive Vice President, Global Government Relations

¹ Paramount’s Smoking and Tobacco Depiction Policy, effective January 1, 2013, can be found here: <https://www.paramount.com/inside-studio/studio/business-conduct/smoking-and-tobacco-depiction-policy>