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CVS Caremark Sets Powerful Example with Decision to Stop Selling Tobacco Products

Statement of Matthew L. Myers

President, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

Kingsford and Iron River, MI, February 5, 2014 – CVS Caremark today set a powerful example for all retailers, especially those involved in health care, by announcing that it will end the sale of tobacco products at its more than 7,600 stores throughout the United States.

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids applauds CVS for this courageous and historic decision. It represents one of the strongest actions any business has ever taken to address the enormous public health problems caused by tobacco use. CVS's decision will reduce the availability of cigarettes and other tobacco products and sends an unmistakable message to all Americans, especially children, that tobacco use is uniquely harmful and socially unacceptable.

In making this decision, CVS has recognized that selling tobacco products – the number one cause of preventable death – is fundamentally incompatible with its commitment to improving the health of its customers. We urge other pharmacies and indeed all retailers to quickly follow CVS's example.

CVS's decision represents the bold leadership needed from all segments of our society to accelerate progress against tobacco and ultimately end the tobacco epidemic for good. It comes appropriately as the nation marks the 50th anniversary of the first Surgeon General's report on smoking and health, and just weeks after the latest Surgeon General's report found that smoking is even more hazardous and takes an even greater toll on the nation's health.

The Surgeon General reported that smoking kills 480,000 Americans annually, sickens millions more and costs the nation more than \$289 billion in health care expenses and other economic costs every year. The latest report also underscored that tobacco use is first and foremost a pediatric epidemic – 90 percent of adult smokers began at or before age 18 and 5.6 million kids alive today will die prematurely from smoking-caused disease unless current trends are reversed. These findings make it increasingly untenable for any responsible business to continue to sell tobacco products.

CVS's decision adds critical momentum to the strong actions already taken this year to reduce tobacco use, including the release of the new Surgeon General's report, the continuation of the CDC's Tips from Former Smokers media campaign that encourages smokers to quit and the launch this week of the FDA's The Real Cost media campaign aimed at preventing youth from using tobacco.

Together, these actions will help achieve the goals set by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and six other public health and medical organizations in January: To reduce smoking rates to less than 10 percent within 10 years, protect all Americans from secondhand smoke within five years and ultimately eliminate the death and disease caused by tobacco. CVS's decision to end tobacco sales will help ensure that it does not take another 50 years to achieve these goals.

For information on quitting smoking, please call the Health Department at 779-7234 or call Michigan's Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW. To get involved with the Tobacco Free Coalition, please call Kelly Rumpf, Health Educator at the same number.

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