

*SAMPLE LETTER -- for participants in Essential Action's Global Partnerships for Tobacco Control program*

[Name and Address of PM peer reviewer]

Dear [Name]:

It has come to the attention of our organizations that you have agreed to serve as a peer reviewer for the Philip Morris External Research Program.

[Introduce your organizations, including name, location, and a brief overview of the work you do.]

Given our strong interest in tobacco control both locally and globally, we are understandably concerned that you have chosen to associate yourself and your institution with a company with a disturbing track record of putting profits over the interest of public health.

As sincere as your reasons for participating in Philip Morris External Research Program may be, internal Philip Morris documents clearly outline how the company has used ties with doctors and researchers over many decades to legitimize its activities. Despite the company's current multi-million PR campaign designed to convince the public that it has "changed," there is no concrete evidence to support the rhetoric. If anything, the truth is to the contrary. Philip Morris is simply marketing its cigarettes more aggressively overseas, where it now derives almost two-thirds of its tobacco revenues.

For example, [Give a detailed example of an outrageous Philip Morris marketing strategy in your or your partner's country, e.g. free cigarette distribution, Marlboro baby clothing, etc. If you need ideas, check out Essential Action's report "Addicted to Profit: Big Tobacco's Expanding Global Reach" in your introductory packet or at <http://www.essentialaction.org/addicted/>. A more complete list of country case studies developed by the San Francisco Tobacco Free Project is online at <http://tobaccofreekids.org/campaign/global/casestudies/>]

Philip Morris's continued disregard for the health and well being of the world's people is one of the primary factors behind the global epidemic of tobacco-related disease, which according to the World Health Organizations will kill 10 million people annually by 2030, 70% in developing countries. Given such mind-boggling, sobering statistics, it is imperative that doctors, researchers, public health officials, teachers, and non profit organizations focus their attention on the most effective methods of preventing people from starting to use tobacco products and helping those who do to quit.

While it may not seem that you are doing any great harm serving as a peer reviewer for Philip Morris, your association with the company is damaging to the cause of public health as well as your reputation as a researcher. Lending your name and institutional affiliation to Philip Morris lends the company the legitimacy it is desperately seeking --

legitimacy which itself may serve to make smoking appear more palatable, both in the U.S. and abroad.

Your participation in their External Research Program is also an endorsement, however subtle, of the company's influence over otherwise independent researchers. Analysis of tobacco-industry sponsored research over the past few decades shows that it more often favors industry positions than non-industry funded research. We expect that Philip Morris will use its new research program to try to persuade governments around the world not to implement vital tobacco control legislation.

In light of these concerns, we ask that you to: 1) Refuse to accept any money that Philip Morris offers you, and to return any money that they have already given. 2) Notify the company that you will refuse to participate further in the company's External Research Program as a peer reviewer or in any other capacity.

We trust that you share our interest in promoting public health worldwide and hope you will reconsider your involvement with Philip Morris, both for the sake of public health as well as your reputation as a researcher.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,  
[Names and titles]