What are AT&T and Disney getting for $156.7 billion?

They’re getting into the tobacco business. After buying at least 360 tobacco-contaminated movies from Warner and Fox—movies proven to recruit millions of kids to smoke—AT&T and Disney must deal with a global tobacco control treaty.

AT&T is a telecom company. So it may not be familiar with the W.H.O. Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). This global treaty obligates governments to end the promotion of tobacco in film and on video. For example: the hundreds of Warner Bros. movies with smoking that AT&T is now planning to monetize worldwide. Half of these films are youth-rated by the MPAA. Already, they’ve delivered more than 70 billion tobacco exposures to domestic theater audiences. Subtract the youth market and what are these movies worth under FCTC Article 13?

Disney’s recent films are 100% smokefree. But not after Disney buys at least 157 recent films with smoking from 21st Century Fox. More than half (56%) of these films are youth-rated. So far, they’ve delivered 33 billion tobacco exposures to domestic theater audiences. Irony? When Disney buys Fox, it’s taking on tobacco content equal to three Miramaxes, the chain-smoking film division Disney sold off in 2010. In February 2018, large shareholders asked Disney how it plans to market Fox’s smoking films responsibly. Disney has yet to provide a substantive answer.

France, India, the U.K., Nigeria, China, Canada and the U.S. are among countries that have adopted or are currently considering adult ratings or other policies to safeguard kids from smoking on screen.

These nations alone represent 40 percent of the global film market. In all, 181 governments are party to the FCTC treaty and obligated to end tobacco promotion in entertainment media. Remedies for existing films include: posting tobacco warnings at points-of-sale; running strong anti-tobacco spots before the films, in all media; and requiring producers to come clean about tobacco industry payoffs in a film’s production chain.

For a list of 360 tobacco-contaminated films acquired by AT&T and Disney, go to http://bit.ly/costly-films

One little letter will save a million lives.