

**IN FAVOR OF: HOUSE BILL 5360
TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM OSPINA
MILFORD POLICE OFFICER
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BEFORE THE GENERAL LAW COMMITTEE OF
THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY
March 6, 2012

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee, my name is Officer William Ospina. I have been employed as a Police Officer with the City of Milford for the past 14 years. Also, a very important role in my life is being a father of four children.

I am here today to speak in favor of HB 5360 before this Committee, An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Certain Dangerous Substances, Items and Products to Minors.

I have worked with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) in the Tobacco Prevention and Enforcement Program (TPEP) with Special Investigators for the past 5 years. In Milford we currently have 82 vendors who sell tobacco and tobacco related paraphernalia. During this time I have noticed an increase in vendors selling more tobacco-related paraphernalia, including, but not limited to, rolling paper, smoking pipes, air-driven and water pipes, smoking tubes and masks, and bongs.

Over these 5 years there has been a steady rise in violators who sell cigarettes and tobacco products to minors. The Internet and social media websites provide opportunities for our youth to communicate with each other to tell each other what locations are easiest to get tobacco products and tobacco related paraphernalia.

CGS 53-344(b) and 53-344(c) current language only address the sale and possession of tobacco to a minor. We need to add language to address tobacco related paraphernalia as well as possession in private settings in these statutes.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with your committee about this matter today.

Sincerely,



Officer William Ospina
Milford Police Department