

March 14, 2013

**Statement to Connecticut Public Health Committee**

I am writing to request that you vote NO on Senate Bill 990, which inaccurately categorizes the vapor from electronic cigarettes as "smoke" for inclusion in established indoor smoking bans.

I started smoking when I was 13. I smoked for 36 years, and tried every FDA-approved method to try to quit. I knew I should quit, but every time I tried, something drove me back to smoking, not the least of which is that I really enjoyed smoking. After many failed attempts, I finally gave up on quitting. I knew I would always be a smoker.

In August of 2010 I heard about an electronic cigarette store that had opened in my town. I was initially skeptical of the claims that it could replace smoking, but I decided to find out more. I was able to test the device in the store, and was impressed enough to buy a kit that was similar in size to a tobacco cigarette. That day I began an almost effortless transition from smoker to vaper. The most amazing thing for me was that after using the electronic cigarette for a week, I didn't even want to smoke a cigarette. Once I started vaping, the desire to light up a cigarette was gone. That was something no pharmaceutical nicotine replacement therapy product had accomplished.

My story is by no means unique. Thousands of smokers are successfully replacing most or all of their tobacco cigarettes with this safer way to use nicotine, and this is one reason that the proposed legislation is misguided.

In spite of the FDA's 2009 statement that it found so-called toxic chemicals and carcinogens, the fact is that the FDA did not find what any reasonable person would consider to be HARMFUL levels of either one. The ability to detect a chemical does not represent the actual health risks - or lack thereof. In this case, "detection" most certainly does not equal "harmful." Dr. Carl Phillips, an expert in tobacco harm reduction, has calculated that just a few months of smoking tobacco cigarettes is more harmful than a lifetime of electronic cigarette use.

Since e-cigarettes were introduced, there have been NO reports of serious adverse health effects. In fact, people like me who have switched to e-cigarettes are reporting very few side effects other than improved breathing, increased lung capacity and better stamina. Non-smokers exposed to the vapor have reported that the vapor is not offensive nor irritating. If the vapor from e-cigarettes does not cause harmful reactions to the user or to bystanders, there is no logical reason to prohibit their use.

In fact, there is clear reason to allow e-cigarette use where smoking is prohibited, namely, as an incentive for smokers to switch to e-cigarettes. I have been approached by smokers who are interested in e-cigarettes, and I am happy to tell them about my experience. I am proud to tell you that many people are no longer smoking because of the assistance I have been able to provide to them: my brother-in-law, my nephew, my husband's co-worker, my co-worker's sister, my best friend's son, the manager at my local craft store. And this list continues to grow as they in turn are helping others. While some e-cigarettes may look like tobacco cigarettes, there is NO combustion, NO smoke, NO tar, NO stench, NO need for an ashtray, NO butts, and no litter. This clearly differentiates them from tobacco cigarettes, and also makes a ban on their use unenforceable, since there is no lingering odor or visible smoke lingering in the air.

Smoking bans were established to ensure that bystanders would not be subjected to second-hand smoke. The e-cigarette was invented to enable an adult to use nicotine without the harmful effects of inhaling burning tobacco. In the old days, people smoked for the nicotine but died from the chemicals in smoke. This technology should be embraced as the life-saving device it was meant to be. Banning the use of e-cigarettes is about as enforceable as banning someone from picking their nose: You might be offended by the sight, but if you don't see them do it, how would you prove it?

This committee should be concerned about every smoker in Connecticut. Despite massive efforts to reduce the smoking rate, some adults continue to smoke.

Restricting the use of safer alternatives simply cannot be the intent of anyone who truly cares about health. This defies logic.

I strongly urge the Connecticut Committee on Public Health to use science-based facts and NOT include e-cigarettes in indoor public use bans.

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