

To the members of the Public Health Committee,

It has been brought to my attention that a proposed bill "No. 5286" is to be introduced in the legislature on Friday, February 28th regarding the packaging requirements for "e-cigarette" products. As a former smoker and current user of personal vaporizers aka electronic cigarettes I'm concerned about the implications that such a bill could have on not only e-cigarette users and smokers, but the state of Connecticut as a whole.

There are countless studies available that demonstrate the reduced risk involved with "vaping" (using an e-cigarette) as opposed to smoking cigarettes. I do not believe that vaping is harmless, nor do any other e-cigarette users, but what I do believe, and what scientists have revealed with their studies is that using e-cigarettes as an alternative to smoking tobacco results in fewer health complications over the user's lifetime. In a perfect world cigarettes wouldn't exist and there would be no need for e-cigarettes. Sadly this isn't the case and like many other times in our life we must make a decision where the better option is a lesser of two evils. While I don't think e-cigarettes are "good for you" I do know that making the switch from cigarettes to e-cigarettes will save lives. Anything that hampers the sale or distribution of e-cigarettes (such as bill 5286) will be causing harm to people who are trying to quit smoking.

If you search for the term "e-cigarette" on Google you'll be provided with a staggering number of retailers selling vaping supplies. In the last few years the market for e-cigarettes has exploded. Here in Connecticut we went from zero vaping supply stores 3 years ago to nearly a dozen today. A very dedicated, industrious community of vapers has developed in the United States and this has resulting in the creation of many small businesses. Unlike the tobacco industry, where the money you spend on a pack of cigarettes ends up in the coffers of a faceless corporation somewhere, the money you spend on vaping supplies goes to mom and pop businesses, including many in our own state. Instead of restricting e-cigarettes we should be embracing the industry because it means increased tax revenue and more jobs. Imagine if the thirty-eight billion dollar annual revenue of the tobacco industry was going to the people of the United States instead of tobacco companies. The added tax revenue alone would be staggering.

I'd like to thank those in the Connecticut legislature who took the time to read my letter and I truly hope some of what I said resonates with you. I yearn for the day where people no longer lose their loved ones to tobacco related health complications. We can't accomplish this in one day but by opposing bill 5286 we can take one small step towards that bright future.

-Bryan Winkler
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