

Public Health Committee
State of Connecticut General Assembly

Monday, February 23, 2015

House Bill 5219
AN ACT PROHIBITING THE USE OF
ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES IN SCHOOLS

Submitted by Stephen Curl
Director – Youth Tobacco Prevention
RAI Services Company

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important measure. My name is Stephen Curl and I represent RAI Services Company which is a subsidiary of Reynolds American Inc. On behalf of Reynolds American and its operating companies, we applaud your effort here today, and we want to voice support for your proposal to ban vapor products, also known as electronic cigarettes, in schools.

As background, Reynolds American Inc. is the parent company of R.J. Reynolds Vapor Company, which makes the VUSE Digital Vapor Cigarette. Reynolds American Inc. is also the parent company of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, the second-largest U.S. tobacco company. Reynolds American Inc.'s (RAI) subsidiaries also include American Snuff Company, the second-largest manufacturer of smokeless tobacco products; Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Company, manufacturer of Natural American Spirit tobacco products; and Nicovum USA and Nicovum AB, which market innovative nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products in the U.S. and Sweden, respectively, under the ZONNIC brand name.

All of our companies are guided by a strong belief that minors should never use any form of tobacco or tobacco-derived nicotine products, including vapor products. We believe that youth exposure should be limited to help prevent youth tobacco use.

For this reason, we believe that the possession and use of vapor products in youth-focused facilities such as schools, daycare facilities and playgrounds should be prohibited. Current Connecticut law prohibits smoking within a school building while school is in session or student activities are being conducted. Proposed Bill No. 5219 would expand the ban to include electronic cigarettes in schools. This bill is a necessary step to close the loophole in the current law on e-cigarette use in schools and strengthen youth tobacco prevention in this state.

Additionally, we believe that the possession and use of ALL tobacco products should be banned from schools and daycare facilities. This prohibition should not just apply to minors, but also to adults. Prohibitions in these places make sense because this is where minors spend a majority of their time.

Vapor products are fast emerging as a non-combustible alternative to smoking traditional cigarettes, but they still contain nicotine, which is addictive and, therefore, not appropriate for use by minors.

It is notable that Connecticut legislators took an important step during the 2014 legislative session by making it illegal to sell vapor products to minors. Common-sense approaches like what is proposed here today and the measure that passed last year will go a long way towards keeping vapor products out of the hands of minors.

We applaud this effort to prevent youth tobacco use, as we believe it is essential to the integrity of our business. Significant headway has been made in reducing teen smoking over the last 20 years, but we believe that more can, and should, be done to further reduce youth tobacco use. And, as part of our strategy to transform the tobacco industry, we are working to help accelerate the decline in youth tobacco use through many corporate, legislative and educational initiatives, such as the Right Decisions, Right Now: Be Tobacco Free youth tobacco prevention program.

Again, we urge legislators to adopt House Bill No. 5219 to ban the use of electronic cigarettes in schools and help strengthen youth tobacco prevention in this state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.