

**Testimony of Betsey Chadwick, Director, MCSAAC
Concerning
Proposed Bill No. 6283, AN ACT REGULATING ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES**

Public Health Committee Hearing - March 11, 2015

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

My name is Betsey Chadwick, from the town of Portland. As director of the Middlesex County Substance Abuse Action Council, we ask for your strong support of *Proposed Bill #6283, An Act Regulating Electronic Cigarettes*. It is a comprehensive attempt to curb the use of a dangerous new product. Now that the top-selling *Blu* brand of e-cigarettes belongs to R.J. Reynolds, and our local Walgreens and Rite Aid are selling these products, we can expect advertising to skyrocket.

I am seeing e-cigarette commercials already on major TV stations in the evening.

We have read the Yale University study which indicates that a quarter of our high school youth have tried vaping. Our own school surveys conclude the same. Twenty-two percent have used some form of electronic cigarettes, a figure that is *60% higher than the national average*. The "Happy Lung" shop in Clinton boasts 28 fruit and candy flavored "gourmet e-juices." And that's just a local sampling.

We have heard teenage boys brag: "I'm not a *vapor*, I'm a *smoker*." High school students call vaping pens "our generation's cigarettes." One 15-year-old girl who had never smoked bought an e-cig thinking it was safe. Now she reports, "I can't live without it." Last May, a rural town in Connecticut suffered break-ins at two convenience stores. Only one item was stolen: fruit flavored disposable hookahs. The thief was a juvenile who planned to sell them to his peers.

My agency surveyed school principals in Middlesex County: 26% thought that vaping among their students was already a problem (in fact, one called it "the bane of my life") and 74% indicated that it was "not a problem yet, but something to watch." Not one principal told us that vaping is "not a problem."

While tobacco companies argue that they are offering a healthier alternative to adult smokers, virtually no ads are pitched that way. ENDS products are sold as sexy, fun, safe, clean, and flavorful. And it's effective. The majority of people we've spoken with believe that e-cigs produce water vapor. (It is burnt propylene glycol.) They think that e-cigarettes, vaping pens, and disposable hookahs are fundamentally different. (They are not.) They don't know that these products contain nicotine. (It can be twice that of cigarettes.) They are unaware that tobacco companies are producing them. (They are.)

The entire ENDS product line is so confusing, in fact, that a pharmacist in Portland, Connecticut inquired, "So what exactly is harmful about these things?" When told the facts he replied, "Wow, the public really *does* need more information."

Proposed bill 6283 is an important step toward providing the Connecticut public with the information they need.