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March 11, 2015

Public Health Committee

Dear Public Health Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to work with you and our legislators, look to you both for help in assisting the people and businesses they represent and for that reason I firmly oppose HB 6283

I support age restriction and already age verify customers. Beyond being extremely unfavorable to businesses and consumers, Bill 6283 seeks to ensure adult consumers continue smoking combusted cigarettes through its well-intentioned but exceedingly misguided requirements.

Classification of vapor products as tobacco is inappropriate given that the FDA has recognized and stated that regulation under the Family Smoking and Tobacco Control Act (FSPTCA) of 2009 is inappropriate and not proportional to the harm caused. The FSPTCA was enacted to address the blatant lies and death and disease caused by Big Tobacco; a wholly different industry than the one that has pioneered the vapor market and given rise to many independent businesses in Connecticut.

Regulating tobacco products is a direct response to the known harms they cause whereas vapor products do not contain tobacco and have been determined by experts to be 95% less harmful.

Mitch Zeller, the Director for the Center for Tobacco Products at the FDA has stated publicly that for smokers unable to unwilling to quit, vapor products are the preferred alternative.

Regulation, classification and treatment of vapor products should be approached from a position of endeavoring to protect the public health from death and disease caused by combusted tobacco rather than ensuring that through increased taxation, regulation and operational burdens, adult smokers are no longer incentivized to switch to an alternative.

The most recent Surgeon General Report increased annual estimates of tobacco-related deaths from 443,000 to 480,000 per year, due to new research showing yet additional diseases caused by cigarette smoking.

All of the 480,000-estimated tobacco related deaths each year in the USA are due to a single tobacco product—the machine-made cigarette.

If the current flat trend continues, as it appears likely to do, an estimated 9,600,000 Americans will die of a cigarette-related illness over the next 20 years (480,000 deaths per year × 20 years).

“Harm reduction” does not mean “harmless”. All of these products, including the pharmaceutical nicotine products pose more of a potential health risk than usually accepted in other consumer products. None are risk free. It is only in comparison to cigarettes that they can be considered very low risk.

Nicotine vaporizers, including e-cigarettes and related products, show substantial promise as a vehicle for THR.¹

The enlightened and health conscious path supports the use of vapor products and does not confuse them with combusted tobacco products:

¹ International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health ISSN 1660-4601 www.mdpi.com/journal/ijerph, Joel Nitzkin

(1) E-cigarettes provide a satisfactory alternative to smoking (nicotine, sensory and ritual aspects) and will displace cigarette use in the consumer market for recreational nicotine.

(2) E-cigarettes dramatically reduce risks to health, likely by 95-100%, among those who switch with negligible impacts on bystanders, at lower cost, and with lower social stigma. The vast majority of harm in smoking comes from tar and hot gases – products of combustion, rather than nicotine. These are almost entirely absent in e-cigarette vapor.

(3) E-cigarettes are a market-based public health phenomenon that “meets people where they are”. The public health benefit does not rely on public spending, coercion, prohibition, punitive taxes, fear, stigma or treating smokers as though they are ill.

(4) The risk of harmful unintended consequences, like gateways to smoking, are low, remain hypothetical and are so far unsupported by any evidence.²

HB 6283 has the opportunity to address a public scourge that kills more people than many illnesses combined and can do so through a partnership with the small businesses that make up the vapor industry in the state.

Contrary to what many believe, the pioneers and entrepreneurs started the vapor industry did so because they experienced a great benefit from using vapor products and saw an opportunity to provide the same products to other cigarette smokers. These businesses grew organically, independent of government help or assistance. Watching from the sidelines for several years, Big Tobacco companies entered the market, leading to confusion about vapor products.

Vapor products are intended for adult smokers of cigarettes, and I would gladly support a clean age restriction bill not designed to stigmatize consumers of vapor products or bankrupt businesses.

Sincerely,

Laura Redding

² E-cigarettes, vaping and public health A summary for policy-makers, <http://www.clivebates.com/documents/vapebriefing.pdf>