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Dear Public Health,

I am writing as a voter and taxpayer to ask you to oppose SB 290, and I strongly urge you to remove vapor products and smokeless tobacco from this legislation. Including low-risk, smoke-free products like e-cigarettes/vapor products, which are estimated to be 99% less hazardous than smoking, in this legislation is bad public policy.

Should this bill become law, adult 18 - 20 year old smokers will not only be prevented from legally purchasing cigarettes, but will also be denied access to low-risk vapor products that have helped many smokers finally become smoke-free. Forcing these young adults to rely on expensive, ineffective nicotine replacement products that have an established failure rate of 93 - 97% is not a fair choice. Simply enacting a sudden ban on sales of ALL tobacco and vapor products to some adults that have likely been smoking since they were teenagers is not a humane solution.

Denying access to these potentially life-saving products to persons between the ages of 18 and 21 is a solution in search of a problem. The “problem” of youth access to smoke-free tobacco products and e-cigarettes has been routinely overstated. Frequently, the justification for making vapor products less accessible to minors is a ginned-up fear that these products may act as a gateway to smoking. However, the CDC’s own National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) shows this is a baseless assumption -- youth smoking rates continue to decline to record lows (http:// rodutobaccotruth.blogspot.com /2015/10/the-cdc-buries-lead-teen-e-cigarette. html). Certainly, no one is advocating that kids should have unbridled access to nicotine products, but it is apparent that making e-cigarettes less available to adults will potentially undo the recent record declines in smoking.

It is disappointing to see proposals such as these being seriously considered in an age where policy makers and consumers have come to value the contributions of other harm reduction strategies. While the Institute of Medicine (IOM) estimates that Tobacco 21 laws may reduce the number of smokers in the United States by 3 million more people by 2060 than if the status quo in tobacco control is maintained, those estimates do not take into account the contribution of the availability of vapor products to reducing smoking rates. Arguably, given current trends, access to vapor products will contribute to more than 3 million people -- who, otherwise, would likely continue smoking -- quitting over the next 2 years.

I look forward to your response on this issue. I, along with my fellow members of CASAA (Consumer Advocates for Smoke-free Alternatives Association), thank you for considering my comments and hope you will oppose misguided attempts to limit adult use of low-risk, smoke-free e-cigarettes.

Sincerely,
bruce bowler