

**Public Health Committee  
Public Hearing – March 21, 2018  
Senate Bill 164 AA Raising the Legal Age To  
Purchase Tobacco To Twenty-One  
Erin E. Herring, Event Coordinator  
Recreation & Parks, City of Norwalk**

I would like to thank the Public Health committee leadership and members for providing me with the opportunity to comment in support of HB/SB 164 AA Raising the Legal Age for Purchase and Use of Tobacco Products, on behalf of the American Heart Association.

It has become crucial to pass the aforementioned Bill 164AA, and if it does not pass, there will be a new kind of epidemic in the country which will kill our children at staggering rates. The price of cigarettes has not proven to be a deterrent and vaping is now the new smoking, and it must be addressed NOW.

Companies such as E-Cigarette Empire are making e-cigarettes very appealing and attractive and are focusing the marketing directly at impressionable children and young adults. There are different colors, flavors, sexy cigarettes, all things that will make vaping/smoking "cool". It is getting to a very dangerous level and not having the ability to stop companies from manufacturing and selling these items, we, as a country, as a state and as parents need this bill to pass so at the very least, make it more difficult to obtain these products until the age of 21.

Younger people are unaware of the addictive and harmful properties of these pretty little e-cigarettes and other tobacco products, and the manufacturers target the innocence of children to get them hooked early and keep the addicted through adulthood. They don't realize the irreversible damage being done to their bodies and their minds.

This generation faces many difficult issues then we, as adults, had to deal with. Social media is rampant and boundaries are just about non-existent. As a society, it is our duty to reign in these products and make obtaining these products more difficult for those under the age of 21.

In our state of Connecticut, almost 6% of Middle School students have tried various types of cigarette products, and are easily getting them on-line and various shops. Almost 22% of High School students have tried them as well, as they are easy obtainable. Even more horrific is the fact that one quarter, 25% of cancer related deaths are a direct result of smoking, which, in my opinion is a choice cancer, not a hereditary one and 100% preventable. Over 50,000 young people under the age of 18 will eventually die from some sort of tobacco use, including E-cigarettes.

The negative physical effects of nicotine are awful, especially for a child. In this day and age, when social media determines guilty or innocent, popular or bullied, geek or gorgeous, we, as parents and citizens need to STOP making tobacco products so easy to attain. Changing the age to 21, and enforcing that law, has to make a difference. On-line sites, stores and all those who sell these products must be accountable to make this law work. Please, please pass this extremely prevalent and timely bill. Change has to start somewhere; we owe that to our children.

I respectfully request your support for this important bill.

Sincerely,

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