

My name is Hannah Peterson and I am from Westside Middle School Academy.

I hope to change the way people look at smoking and vaping. Many people do this so they can get a “cooler” image, without thinking about the consequences.

I care about this because kids in school vape. This can eventually lead to them smoking. In just Connecticut, 1500 people under the age of 18 become new daily smokers each year. The CDC reports, “In 2016, more than 2 million U.S. middle and high school students used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days, including 4.3% of middle school students and 11.3% of high school students.” and I do not think this is right. These numbers will gradually rise if the age to buy cigarettes is still at 18.

We have gone into classrooms during advisory to teach the students about the effects of smoking and we talked to the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade lunch waves about the consequences of smoking. In addition to this we created a video about smoking.

I am asking others to ~~do~~ persuade others to stop vaping and smoking. I also am asking for you to take part of the Great American Smokeout (November 16th) and spread awareness about it. More importantly, I am hoping for you to change the age that a US citizen is able to buy a cigarette. Please vote for raising the age of buying cigarettes from the age of 18 to 21.

Questions

Tobacco Free Advocacy Club
Torrington High School

Joanna's Part

Good morning everyone, my name is Joanna Idrovo and I am a junior at Torrington High School. Along with Lauren Contorno from EdAdvance and my science teacher, I run the Tobacco Free Advocacy Club at my school where our mission is to create a smoke-free environment for our classmates and provide educational resources on smoking.

Our high school is located by a public skatepark, and every morning as I pass by I can always spot a small group of students smoking. I know for a fact that some of these students are my age and do not meet the legal age limit to be purchasing tobacco products, which in the state of Connecticut is eighteen. What I do believe may be happening is that they are being supplied their cigarettes by friends or family members that do meet the age limit. It is not uncommon for high school students to have a friend or sibling who is at least eighteen years old, and it may very well be possible that these trusted people are the ones who can supply our students with their cigarettes.

According to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, nearly nine out of ten cigarette smokers had started smoking by the age of eighteen. Additionally, over 2,100 teens aged eighteen or younger become daily smokers each day.

These students are being manipulated by Big Tobacco, who only see them as replacements for the prior generation of smokers. As long as they're making a cut, Big Tobacco doesn't care who is getting their hands on a cigarette.

But to us, to the people that do care, they are much more than just a replacement, which is why we want to help them.

The solution to this, as we see it, is to support Tobacco 21's campaign to raise the legal age limit for purchasing tobacco products in Connecticut to 21. Already, five states have joined the cause and raised their legal age limit for purchasing tobacco to 21. Today, we are asking for you to do the same for us. We will continue to support the mission behind Tobacco 21 if you can help us out as well, and push for legislation in favor of Tobacco 21.

Our Club is also working on creating smoke-free parks in our area. One of the local parks often hosts events in which families take part in, and this includes young children. We want to make this park a smoke free zone for the young children that visit so that they are not negatively influenced by smokers. We are also hoping that you support us in this effort.

Thank you for your time

Tobacco Free Advocacy Club
Torrington High School

Jessica's Part

Hi. My name is Jessica Dong. I'm a Freshman at Torrington High School. I'm also in the Tobacco Free Advocacy Club, just like Joanna. As you know, our mission is to try to provide a safe environment where students can learn and make good choices. To go about doing this, we are trying to help change the legal age for buying tobacco in Connecticut to 21.

Every day at school, I see kids-teenagers that I know are underage-vaping. Whether it's in the bathroom, the park near our school, or school events. There was one time that I went to a football game and I was just sitting there, cheering for my school. Then, the next thing I saw, was that there was a group of teenagers pulling out something. I was watching the game and talking to my friends, so I was unaware of the fact that he and his friends were vaping. Therefore, I did what any other student would do, and I reported this to one of my teachers. The kids and his friends stopped. But that is not the most important part. The most important part is that they were vaping in an area where there were little children around. But what surprises me the most is that no one said anything. No one reported this to the teacher. They just sat there and ignored the people that were vaping. You see, vaping is so common among teens that people think it's normal. But it's not.

Many teenagers are under the impression that vaping or using e-cigarettes is safe, and that neither product contains nicotine. But according an article by Science News for Students, it states that the liquid used in these e-cigarettes are heated up, creating vapors. The vapors contain certain chemicals that are used for a variety of flavors, from bubble gum to jolly ranchers. These flavors are meant to entice a younger demographic and can become addicting to teenagers, and even young middle schoolers. The article also stated that this dangerous product could even harm important organs in the human body including the lungs, brain, heart immune system, and may even harm the male reproductive system. Some small bottles of vape juice even have enough nicotine to kill an adult.

Fortunately, e-cigarettes and vapes are illegal for anyone to purchase under the age of 18 or 19, and it is also illegal to share either product with a minor. However, most people still share them with underage teenagers and online restrictions for buying a vape are somewhat lax.

Our club decided to see how hard is it to actually buy a vape online. It wasn't that hard. Anyone can lie about the information that needed to be provided, or use an older sibling's

information. Maybe, even their parents' information. According to my research, I found out that in some stores, vaping products are even sold to some 16 and 17 years olds, despite the ban on selling vaping products to teens.

Vaping can also lead teens to smoking cigarettes. A study from The Guardian showed that 35.8% of high school seniors vape, nationally. And also nationally, 26.6% of high school seniors smoke a cigarette. That is a scary thought. To think that more than half of the high school seniors in our nation are doing drugs. Another scary thought is that the number of teenagers doing drugs is increasing. More and more teenagers around our nation are smoking or doing drugs. And more and more people are dying because they made a wrong decision.

A lot of people may be wondering why we are doing this. I know that I'm doing this because I don't want to see people destroying their life just because of a decision. I don't want to see people slowly die knowing that they caused this to themselves, and knowing that I did nothing. Maybe some people are going to listen and maybe some people won't. But at least I know that I have tried. We want to you to help support Tobacco 21 for Connecticut. My club and I hope to change some of our community parks to being smoke-free. Thank you for your time.

Jessica Works Cited

<https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/teen-vaping-soars-past-cigarette-use>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/dec/13/e-cigarettes-vaping-more-teens-cigarettes-study>

Hello my name is Rebecca Dowling and I'm from Gilbert high school. I'm here with fellow Freshman and middle schoolers. We run the anti-tobacco club at our school. We wish to become the generation that ends smoking makes the change and prevents other generations from using. We want to raise ^{awareness about} tobacco awareness. This is a real health issue not just for the smokers, but those around ^{them} ~~you~~. We will and ^{are} already holding events to raise this awareness. We also create PSA about different forms of smoking like 1st, 2nd ^{hand} smoking, vaping and similar nicotine products. We think raising the age to 21 will prevent the younger people from getting these products. We want to prevent the use of these products in school, the exposure of high schoolers, middle schoolers, and young children. Be the generation that makes this change. We are making changes in other parts of society. We are the instantaneous generation, we can make this change.

Gilbert School