



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

NED LAMONT
GOVERNOR

MIRIAM E. DELPHIN-RITTMON, Ph.D.
COMMISSIONER

To: Public Health Committee
From: Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon Ph.D., Commissioner
Date: March 4, 2019
Re: Written Testimony regarding HB 7200

Please accept this written testimony from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) on House Bill 7200, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF CIGARETTES, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS TO PERSONS UNDER AGE TWENTY-ONE.

DMHAS is a health care agency with a charge that includes substance use prevention across the lifespan. The DMHAS Tobacco Prevention and Enforcement Program works with communities to inform retailers and the public about laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco to minors and supports prevention through compliance inspections, education and awareness. The Program also works with the US Food and Drug Administration on tobacco related rules and regulation compliance.

While the Department supports the underlying concept in HB7200, some of the language as drafted would be problematic to implement by our sister state agencies. The DMHAS respectfully requests that the Committee review the language provided in sections 47 through 53 of Senate Bill 877 – An Act Concerning Revenue Items to Implement the Governor’s Budget – as a consideration for JFS, which provides a foundation completing the same goal of reducing access to tobacco products by young people.

Raising the age of legal use of tobacco and ENDS would help prevent addiction to nicotine in those products. According to the Institute of Medicine, the parts of the brain most responsible for decision making, impulse control, sensation seeking, and susceptibility to peer pressure continue to develop and change through young adulthood. Adolescent brains are also uniquely vulnerable to the effects of nicotine and nicotine addiction. Studies show nicotine has a detrimental effect the adolescent brain altering normal development that will impact that person for the rest of his or her life. Ninety percent of adult smokers started smoking before the age of 18 years old.

While raising the legal age of tobacco and ENDS product purchasing and use will not eradicate tobacco use, it will reduce the numbers of individuals impacted by the negative consequences of its use. Increasing the purchase age to 21 would eventually impact the number of adults smoking. In Needham Massachusetts, the first city in the nation to restrict the age of purchase and use of tobacco products to 21, the adult smoking rate went from 18% to 8% over a five-year period. If Connecticut were to follow the examples of California, Hawaii, New York City, Boston and Chicago, where tobacco purchase and use is limited to persons over 21, the state may spend significantly less than the \$2.3 billion dollars in tobacco-related health care costs for Connecticut as estimated by the American Cancer Society. It would also reduce the almost 5000 deaths in Connecticut attributed to smoking and the 450 annual deaths of people who die from secondhand smoke.

The use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) and vapor products has increased significantly over the past few years. The Department of Public Health 2017 Youth Tobacco Survey indicates ENDS use has more than doubled by Connecticut high school students from 7.2% use in 2015 to 14.7% use in 2017. ENDS use is the primary factor contributing to an overall increase of use in tobacco related products by middle and high school students.

Increasing the merchant fees to sell products with nicotine, banning ENDS vending machines in facilities minors can enter, increasing sales to minor fines and civil penalties and banning flavored tobacco products will all assist in reducing youth use.

Thank you for considering this testimony during your deliberations related to HB 7200.