

House Bill 7200 Testimony

Dear Public Health Committee members,

My name is Dr. Anna Greer and I am a Professor of Public Health at Sacred Heart University, a Bridgeport CT resident, and a mother. I also serve on the Advisory Board for the Bridgeport Department of Health and Social Services. I am writing today in support of a state policy that 1) restricts the sales of combustible and electronic cigarettes to those age 21 years of age and 2) prohibits flavored tobacco products and nicotine products.

Tobacco 21 is an important opportunity for us to protect the youth of Connecticut from nicotine and tobacco addiction. I work with a team of researchers at Sacred Heart University studying vaping behavior among college students. When I say “vaping” I mean using e-cigarettes, and devices like the Juul. From these studies we have found that almost 70% of Sacred Heart students have tried vaping. We asked students at what age they started vaping. Students who started vaping at a younger age were more likely to be daily vape users now, more likely to show signs of vaping addiction, and more likely to have used marijuana in their vape device.

I have also had conversations with Sacred Heart students desperate to quit vaping but unable to stop because of their addiction. This is particularly disturbing to me as my grandfather smoked his entire life despite repeatedly trying to quit. He ended up dying of lung cancer, and all because he tried cigarettes as a teenager and became addicted.

One of the frustrating parts of watching youth become addicted is that we know tobacco companies and vaping companies have purposely marketed their products to youth to get them hooked early through the use of flavored products. We have an opportunity to fight back to protect our youth by raising the age of tobacco product sales to 21 and banning all flavored tobacco products. As a mom, Connecticut resident, and public health professional, I strongly urge you to take this step to show that you are committed to the health and wellness of our Connecticut youth.

Sincerely,

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