

Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 7200

before the State of Connecticut Legislature's Public Health Committee

Monday March 4, 2019

My name is GERALYN LAUT and I reside at 126 South Mill Drive in Glastonbury, CT.

I am here today to speak to you in my personal behalf but also as a Board Member of the Region 4 Behavioral Health Action Organization, soon to be known as AMPLIFY. As an organization committed to the health and well being of individuals with mental illness and substance abuse disorders, as well as advocates for the delivery and promotion of PREVENTION strategies intended to improve health across an individual's lifespan, we urge you to pass HB 7200 .

Tobacco 21 will diminish youth access to TOBACCO / NICOTINE in ALL of its forms; cigarettes, skinny cigars, cigarillos, chew, snus and the hundreds of electronic delivery devices now available in every corner store, gas station and on the internet, in essence within walking distance or at the fingertips of every adolescent or young adult in our state.

We currently know that 1 out of every two tobacco users will die from a tobacco related disease. For me that fact says it all. As a Tobacco Treatment Specialist, offering individual and or group counseling and support over a span of 30 plus years, I am never ceased to be amazed at the powerful hold nicotine can have on an individual. Fear of the known risks and consequences of smoking nor an actual diagnosis of heart disease, COPD, emphysema or lung cancer seem to be enough to deter long time smokers from continuing to feed their addiction to nicotine. I know this, from my first hand experience supporting individuals in their numerous and for many, lifelong attempts to quit.

While serving as the smoking cessation counselor for the Meriden Health Department from 2011 - 2017, I am aware of the death of 7 of my successful clients.... cases where quitting could not offset the damages. I'd like to think that I've saved some, improved the quality of life for many, and added life years for

others, but I'm here to beg you to prevent tobacco related deaths from occurring in the future.

We all should be concerned about the epidemic we are seeing among youth with regard to the use of E-cigarettes and vaping devices. Although proponents of vaping will tell you how it is intended to help smokers quit, they don't tell you how much money those individuals will continue to spend on the latest device on the market or the re-fills of E-juice or nicotine cartridges over their lifetime. Unlike approved cessation medications, there is no prescription or time limits for the use of electronic nicotine delivery devices. Mimicking the ritual of smoking and high nicotine content, and a high frequency of use will result in an even higher level of nicotine dependence both for adults and youth.

The industry with their predatory marketing tactics are merely luring lifelong consumers. Developing brains that become dependent on nicotine via vaping, albeit with or without long term physical health consequences, will be more susceptible to other addictions and related behavioral health concerns, and even if the day comes when they want to stop, they may just die trying.

Please raise the legal age to purchase all tobacco products to 21 and while you're at it **raise the tax on all related products** making it harder to access and do all that you can to **regulate and or restrict flavorings and other marketing ploys.**

Thank you for your time and good luck with your deliberations.

Geralyn Laut, BS, MA, CPP, CTTS

(Certified Prevention Professional / Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist)

Board Member Region 4 Behavioral Health Action Organization

Member of the MATCH Coalition

Member of the Glastonbury Community Action Partnership

Former Member of the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Board

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