



**Testimony of Pamela Mautte
Member, Connecticut Prevention Network and
Director of the Alliance for Prevention & Wellness, A Program of BHcare
In Support of**

**HB 7200: AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF CIGARETTES, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC
NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS TO PERSONS UNDER AGE TWENTY-ONE.**

Public Health Committee, Hearing Date March 4, 2019

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Senator Somers, Representative Petit, and Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Pamela Mautte and I am the Director of the Alliance for Prevention & Wellness, a program of BHcare in Ansonia and here in my capacity today as the President of the Connecticut Prevention Network (CPN). CPN is the coalition of the five Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations who are focused on substance misuse prevention and mental health wellness efforts.

*I am here today to support **H.B. 7200 - AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF CIGARETTES, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS TO PERSONS UNDER AGE TWENTY-ONE.***

The adolescent brain is still a work in progress and as such, the Surgeon General further said “nicotine use during adolescence can disrupt the formation of brain circuits that control attention, learning and susceptibility to addiction.”

On Oct 11th the Connecticut 2017 Youth Tobacco Survey results were released from the State Department of Public Health- “Overall 14.7% of high school students reported current use of electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), compared to 7.2% in 2015. The survey found 1 in 10 ninth graders and over 1 in 5 twelfth graders currently use ENDS.” In March of 2018, The National Academies concluded “there is substantial evidence that e-cigarette use increases risk of ever using combustible tobacco cigarettes among youth and young adults.” When added with the Surgeon Generals statement, and the CT 2017 Youth Tobacco Survey these pieces begin to collect to form a comprehensive picture of the issue.

We need to act now to make significant changes to ensure today’s youth grow into health adults. We now have a new generation of youth who are becoming addicted to nicotine. While we see a downward trend of youth cigarette use, we see a swift upward trend in youth e-cigarette use. The health consequences from the youth using today, cause long term health consequences and lifelong health costs. Raising the age on these products can drop the initiation rate of nicotine in youth by 25% and also assist in decreasing initiation of other substance among adolescents. Research shows that adolescent smokers are 3x more likely us use alcohol and 8x more likely to use marijuana. The earlier youth begin using these products the more likely they are to become a lifelong user.

We in the Prevention field use SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework to create population level change. Within that framework we assess, build capacity, plan, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive strategy to address an identified topic. Raising the age to 21 is an evidence- based strategy that we promote using to address this issue.

Passing this bill is the **very least** we can do to stem the tide of this epidemic and keep our kids healthy and safe. We need to get to our kids before the behavior starts and delay the age on onset. Delaying age of onset is a proven evidence-based prevention strategy. We have successfully impacted youth behaviors around cigarette smoking during the last 20-30 years. We must do the same with vaping/ENDS and raising the age on all products. **Vaping is smoking and we all need to start looking at it that way.** Therefore, we urge you to support increasing the minimum sale age for tobacco and vaping products from 18 to 21 and help protect Connecticut's youth.

I am available to answer any questions and look forward to working with the committee on this issue further. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Pamela A. Mautte
Director APW
President CPN
(203) 736-8566
Pmautte@bhcare.org

Sources: Surgeon General, CDC, CT DPH, Institutes of Medicine, Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration