

Public Health Committee
Public Hearing – March 4, 2018
***HB 7200 AA Prohibiting The Sale Of Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic
Nicotine Delivery Systems & Vapor Products To Persons Under Age Twenty-One***

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Thank you to Public Health Committee leadership and members for providing me with the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 7200.

I strongly believe it is in the best interest of the residents of Connecticut to prohibit the sale of cigarettes, tobacco, nicotine and vapor products to persons under the age of 21. My family has lived in Connecticut for 380 years. I grew up in Connecticut and, along with my husband, have raised our two daughters here. Providing a safe and healthy environment, one free of cigarettes, was important for us in raising our children. There was no smoking in our home, and our daughters were well aware of the health concerns associated with smoking. In fact, to this day, they marvel at people who smoke and wonder why they do. My daughters are now 23 and 25 years old and have never smoked.

We are very fortunate that our daughters were not tempted to try cigarettes or vaping while in high school, or to fall to peer pressure to take up the nasty habit. But they easily could have been, especially with the ability to purchase such products at a younger age. Peer pressure is a big reason why teens smoke. They are pressured into giving it a try, and then stick with it in part because of the addictive nature. Banning cigarettes and vaping until age 21 will allow our young adults to grow up without worrying about pressure to smoke, since purchasing products as a teenager would be illegal. By the time our young adults are of legal age to purchase tobacco, nicotine and vaping products, they will be more mature and capable of making the decision about smoking on their own, less prone to peer pressure and able to understand the health risks.

If we make these products less accessible, I believe there will be a decrease in the number of young people who smoke and vape, and, in turn, adults who smoke and vape. Use of these products create pollution, toxins, cancer, and lung diseases. They create health issues for both those that smoke as well as those in proximity who breathe in second-hand smoke. Despite warnings about health and pollution, cigarette smoking and use of vaping products continue to grow. News articles indicate that vaping is an epidemic in our high schools – and I strongly believe peer pressure has a lot to do with that.

I am an advocate for healthy lifestyles, including heart health. I am 54 years old and feel very fortunate that I never started this nasty habit myself. My parents started smoked when they were in high school in Connecticut because it was the “cool” thing to do. My brother and I were born into a smoking household, and didn’t pay much attention to it until my mother decided to quit in

the 1970s. As our childhood home became smoke free, I began to notice others who smoked – it smelled nasty and always made me cough. Only later would I learn that I had asthma and the smoke aggravated it.

Heart disease runs in my family. Both of my paternal grandparents, as well as their son (my Uncle), died from heart disease. Did smoking contribute to it? We'll never know for sure, but it certainly didn't help. My grandfather died of a heart attack in his 60s, right after retiring, so I never really got to know him. My grandmother lived longer and was fortunate that modern medicine and two open heart surgeries prolonged her life, though she became impaired from heart disease at too early of an age. And my Uncle died of a heart attack much too young. I also have my own minor heart issue, and certainly do not want to tempt fate and increase my risk of heart disease by smoking or being around others that smoke. I want myself and my family to have the opportunity to live a long, healthy life. Smoking, vaping, second-hand smoke, and smoking related pollution do not fit in that equation. I have also recently witnessed the significant health challenges of my cousin, a smoker since a teenager, as he has battled throat cancer. His life, and those around him, has been changed forever.

My passion for health and wellness, including heart health, has led me to volunteer my time and talents to help others. I am the executive sponsor of the health and wellness committee in our corporate office of Stanley Black & Decker, and participate on the board of the American Heart Association of Central Connecticut, where I have chaired the Hartford Heart Walks for several years and now am Chair of the Board.

We have one life, we need to make it worth living without health impairments from cigarettes, nicotine and vaping products. I respectfully request your support for this important bill.

Regards,

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