



**TESTIMONY OF  
TRINITY HEALTH OF NEW ENGLAND  
SUBMITTED TO THE  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE BY  
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**HB7200, An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Cigarettes Tobacco Products,  
Electronic Nicotine Delivery System and Vapor Products to Persons  
Under 21**

*I am pleased to submit testimony in support of HB7200 An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Cigarettes Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery System and Vapor Products to Persons Under 21.*

I am Dr. Robert Roose from Trinity Health Of New England. By the way of background, Trinity Health Of New England includes Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center and Mount Sinai Rehabilitation Hospital in Hartford, Saint Mary's Hospital in Waterbury, Johnson Memorial Hospital in Stafford Springs and The Mercy Hospital in Springfield, Massachusetts. In addition, our ministry includes physician practices, an ambulatory services networks, home health and post-acute services. We are more than 13,000 health care providers committed to providing compassionate care and improving the health of our community. Trinity Health provides more than 265,000 emergency department visits, 40,000 surgeries and 5,000 births annually.

As an addiction specialist and leader in the field of behavioral health, we know that the best way to reduce health related harm caused by smoking and vaping is to abstain from smoking or at least delay the start of smoking. I know that you have heard all of the arguments before, but cigarette smoking still is the leading cause of preventable deaths – causing 480,000 deaths nationally each year and costing \$170 billion in medical expenses. In Connecticut, the statistics are equally as staggering with 4,900 people predicted to die this year from tobacco use alone at a cost of \$2 billion in

health care. We strongly believe that raising the minimum age to 21 and banning the use of flavoring in tobacco and vaping products will save lives and saving lives is our core business.

If we want to address substance use in our state, and make headway in the disease of addiction, protecting our youth from tobacco is a powerful first step. Addiction is a chronic disease of the brain that impacts one's biology, psychology, and social environment. Tobacco is a priority issue for Trinity Health Of New England because it is a true gateway drug. The majority of patients with chronic mental health and substance use disorders were exposed to tobacco before other drugs, and nicotine is the most common first addiction. The vast majority of our patients first began smoking before the age of 21, when their brains were still developing.

Although Trinity Health Of New England remains wholeheartedly supportive of HB7200, we have a concern that the definition of vapor product in various statutes referenced or amended by HB7200 is too broad and will interfere with patients and providers being able to purchase legitimate therapeutic and medical products, such as nebulizers for asthma.

We urge that every statutory definition that seeks to limit use and access for "vapor products" include an express exemption for medical and therapeutic products and equipment

As you know, a number of towns throughout Connecticut have already passed local Tobacco 21 ordinances. Let's pass legislation on a statewide level and join other states who have already recognized that this legislation would decrease tobacco use and nicotine addiction among youth - which will improve health, save lives and reduce health care costs.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important piece of legislation. I urge its passage.

For additional information, please contact Daniel Keenan, Vice President, Advocacy and Government Relations at (860)714-0437 or [dkeen@TrinityHealth.org](mailto:dkeen@TrinityHealth.org).