



January 30, 2021

To: Co-Chair Senator Mary Daugherty Abrams, Co-Chair Jonathan Steinberg, Vice Chair Saud Anwar, Vice Chair Julie Kushner, Vice Chair Jillian Gilchrest and members of the Connecticut General Assembly Public Health Committee

From: Green Village Initiative, Bridgeport, CT

Re: S.B. No. 326 (RAISED) AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF FLAVORED CIGARETTES, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS.

Following the lead of the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council, Flavors Hook Kids CT, and many Bridgeport and statewide community activists and advocates, who believe the Committee should pass S.B. No 326 to prohibit the sale of menthol and all flavored tobacco products, including flavored e-juices, with no adult venue exemptions.

It is incumbent on lawmakers to make a decision that could reduce heart disease, lung disease, and comorbidities associated with smoking and e-cigarette use in our state during the most deadly airborne pandemic in our lifetimes. These products (menthol, flavored, e-cigarettes), their predatory marketing, the tobacco industry, and the companies that designed these products have increased the likelihood for communities, particularly communities of color, to be at greater risk for COVID-19 (Koma, Artiga, et. al. 2020).

As an organization working towards food justice in our city of Bridgeport we at GVI work closely with black and brown youth and are invested in their growth, development, leadership, and vision for the future. Research conducted at the Department of Psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine in the Division of Substance Abuse cites high and rising rates of youth e-cigarette use and addiction that are extremely concerning (*E-cigarette Use Among High School and Middle School Adolescents*, Krishnan-Sarin, et al. 2015). Advocates indicate increased rates of use, addiction, and associated health risks will continue if lawmakers do not reign in the sale of these products. We strongly believe we must prevent the sale of these products, rather than criminalizing their possession or use to ensure we do not criminalize those addicted to these products but instead make access and continued use of these products more difficult, interrupting the pipeline of users.

We stand alongside our partners in believing the Committee seeks a stronger, more resilient, safer Connecticut for everyone within our state, that begins with strong policy and identifying the impact of previous injustices. Connecticut could follow the path of Massachusetts and California before us in banning the sale of menthol products and the other 60 municipalities who have prohibited the sale of menthol and all flavored tobacco products including flavored e-juices <https://no-smoke.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/flavored-tobacco-product-sales.pdf>

The fight for Black Lives begins at home. Now is the time to listen to black and brown researchers, educators, and activists to protect our next generation. Now is the time to adopt strong tobacco control measures that can protect our state and put health first.

Sincerely,

Ellie Angerame
Executive Director