



**Testimony of Melanie Sue Collins, MD, Pediatric Pulmonologist  
and Alyssa S. Bennett, MD Adolescent Medicine Physician  
at Connecticut Children's  
to the Public Health Committee regarding  
SB 326 *An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Flavored Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic  
Nicotine Delivery Systems and Vapor Products*  
January 29, 2021**

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, and other esteemed members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts about Senate Bill 326, *An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Flavored Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems and Vapor Products*.

Our names are Dr. Melanie Sue Collins and Dr. Alyssa Bennett and, respectively, we work as a Pediatric Pulmonologist and the Division Head of Adolescent Medicine at Connecticut Children's. We are submitting this testimony in support of this proposed legislation because banning flavors in vaping products will help prevent adolescents from trying and becoming addicted to vaping, nicotine, and tobacco products.

Before commenting on the bill, I want to provide some background about Connecticut Children's. We are the state's only independent health system focusing exclusively on the needs of children. Although our main hospital campus is located in Hartford, we have over a dozen locations across the state and partner with many adult providers throughout the region to help our pediatric experts provide care to children from all corners of Connecticut. In addition to caring for kids in the clinical setting and our cutting-edge pediatric research, we remain committed to keeping children in our communities healthy through community-initiatives that help address the social determinants of health, because as we know, many of the challenges facing children and families have only been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. Lastly, like our adult counterparts, Connecticut Children's has had to adapt to this new and challenging time to ensure that children have easy access to the care they need, even during a pandemic.

E-cigarettes and vaping products contain harmful substances such as heavy metals, volatile organic compounds, cancer causing chemicals, and ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deeply into the lungs. We also know that just one JUUL pod can contain as much nicotine as 20 cigarettes and that over 2,807 Americans have suffered severe lung damage due to EVALI (E-cigarette, or Vaping, Product Use-Associated Lung Injury). Despite these scary facts, 1 in 10 ninth graders and 1 in 5 twelfth graders are currently using e-cigarettes (Connecticut Youth Tobacco Survey, 2017). As pediatricians and as policymakers, we should be doing all that we can to prevent children from being exposed to this harmful and addictive practice and this bill takes important steps toward that goal.

There is no doubt that non-traditional flavors in vaping products, like fruit and candy, especially appeal to young people. As demonstrated in a study published in *Pediatrics* in December 2019, 93.8% of children who vape are vaping these non-traditional flavors. This study also showed that these types of flavors were associated with increased number of puffs per vaping session as well as the continuation of vaping. Studies from the CDC also tell us that nicotine use in

adolescence may increase the risk for future addiction to other drugs. It is critically important that we prevent youth from trying nicotine-containing products through vaping, as they are extremely addicting and can have lifelong and costly health implications.

Thank you for your consideration of this position. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Jane Baird, Connecticut Children's Senior Director of External Relations, at 860-837-5557.