



February 7, 2021

To the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut State Legislature,

I am writing, and will testify, in favor of:

S.B. 326 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF FLAVORED CIGARETTES, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS.

My name is Dorian Fuhrman and I am one of the co-founders of Parents Against Vaping e-cigarettes (PAVe). In 2018, along with 2 other moms, I started PAVe as a grassroots response to the predatory behavior of e-cigarette and vaping companies, like JUUL then, and PuffBar, Bidi, Stig and so many others now, that are targeting teens.

However, the real catalyst for founding PAVe was when we discovered, in April of 2018, that JUUL had sent a representative into our sons' unsuspecting high school to tell 9th graders that the company's wildly popular flavored e-cigarettes were "totally safe." We, and our kids, testified about this incident in Congress in July 2019.

But what began as 3 moms sitting around the kitchen table has turned into a national grassroots movement of parents, including many here in Connecticut, who won't stand by and let these e-cigarette companies and Big Tobacco target our kids.

Data from the 2020 National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) shows that the youth vaping epidemic continues to be at EPIDEMIC levels. 1 in 4 high-school students here in Connecticut are using e-cigarettes. **3.6 million teens in the US vape - a number that both the FDA and the Surgeon General declared as "epidemic". And, MORE KIDS WHO USE E-CIGARETTES ARE BECOMING ADDICTED - frequency of use among high school students has steadily increased!**

Among all current youth e-cigarette users, almost 83% report use of flavored products, with fruit, mint, candy, and menthol among the most commonly used. What's more, over the last year there has been a 1000% increase in the use of disposable vaping products among high school e-cigarette users (and a 400% increase among middle school users!).

The data is also clear that vaping has serious negative impacts on children's long-term health. E-cigarettes contain enormous amounts of nicotine that can cause anxiety, depression, mood disorders, and permanent cognitive change to an adolescent's developing brain and create pathways for further addiction.

And then there is the harm to our kids developing LUNGS. According to a recent Stanford-led study teens who vape are 5-to-7 times more likely to contract COVID. Yet tobacco companies continue to push their candy-flavored, minty, and mentholated products at our kids, with cotton candy, bubble gum and mango versions widely available on retail shelves throughout Connecticut. Menthol alone is used by 38% of teen e-cigarette users (2020 NYTS). However, that number is likely much, much higher: the current teen favorites are mentholated "ICED" flavors such as "Iced Lemonade", "Blueberry Ice" and "Lush Ice", and are purchased and used by teens around the country.

The federal regulations DO NOT prevent kids from accessing flavored e-cigarettes and vaping products. They leave Menthol pod systems like Juul on the market, but also the open tank systems whose flavored juices will be used to refill other systems, and thousands of disposable flavored e-cigarette products. These disposable devices are teen favorites - they are cheap, and come in a variety of flavors.

Additionally, kids who vape are 4-7 times more likely (Truth Initiative) to begin smoking traditional cigarettes. And, since the teen e-cigarette favorite is menthol, it is logical to assume that these kids will migrate to menthol cigarettes. And, tobacco companies have used menthol cigarettes to target African-Americans for decades. Menthol cigarettes are highly addictive and more dangerous than regular cigarettes. It is time to stop them here in Connecticut!

In the absence of cohesive federal guidelines, and until Connecticut, like it's neighboring states of New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, protects our kids and bans all flavored e-cigarette and other flavored tobacco products -- and that must include MENTHOL CIGARETTES left on the market in 2009 when all other flavored cigarettes were banned--we will simply be playing an endless game of whack-a-mole.

Thank you,

Dorian Fuhrman

Co-founder

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