

**Connecticut State Medical Society Testimony in support of
Raised Bill 326 An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Flavored Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic
Nicotine Delivery Systems and Vapor Products
Presented to the Public Health Committee**

February 1, 2021

Senators Abrams, Representatives Steinberg, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee; on behalf of the physicians and physicians in training of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS), thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of **Raised Bill 326 An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Flavored Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems and Vapor Products.**

Cracking down on flavored tobacco products is critical to reversing an epidemic in youth use of electronic vapor products and to reduce youth use of other tobacco products. Numerous studies have shown the upwards trajectory in youth e-cigarette use since 2011. Here in Connecticut, the 2019 Connecticut School Health Survey found that **27%** of high school students used electronic vapor products. Studies show that the average age of first-time nicotine users is 14.5 years old.

Flavors are a primary reason why youth are using e-cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products. Flavors alter the taste and reduce the harshness of tobacco products, making them more appealing to young people and easier for them to use. A University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill 2019 study found that the use of flavored e-cigarettes contributes to multiple pathways linked to high e-cigarette use among youth. The study, published in the British Medical Journal, found that:

- Flavors in e-cigarettes decrease the perception that e-cigarettes are harmful, particularly fruit and candy flavors
- Flavors increase the willingness of youth and young adults to try or initiate the use of e-cigarettes
- Flavors increase product appeal among adults
- Flavors are a primary reason that adults use e-cigarettes

Consistent evidence shows that flavors attract both youth and adults to the use of e-cigarettes. Nicotine is highly addictive and has been proven to impact brain development in youth. In adults, there is no shortage of the harmful health impact of nicotine, including, but not limited to increases in blood pressure, heart rate, flow of blood to the heart and narrowing of the arteries. Tobacco use contributes or is the direct cause of many of the top causes of death including, heart disease, cancer, strokes, COPD and now COVID-19.

There are currently over 7,000 e-cigarette flavors on the market including blueberry cheesecake, mango, cinnamon, sweet milk, and lemon crumble cake. Many of the flavors have candy or sweet names such as gummy bear, cookies n' cream and cotton candy – obviously appealing to younger e-cigarette users.

To highlight the potential harm of vaping products, we only need to look back to August 2019 when reports began to come in about lung injuries that were occurring in otherwise healthy patients who reported the use

of vaping products. This outbreak spread to all 50 states, including Connecticut. Connecticut needs to act now to reduce the use and attractiveness of these harmful vaping products before the next inevitable vaping-associated illness does further harm to Connecticut's residents. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the need to reduce the usage of harmful products that impact the health of Connecticut's residents.

Passage of Raised Bill 326 is a critical step to reducing youth and adult consumption of cigarettes and vaping products and improving the health of Connecticut's residents. We urge your support of this important legislation.