



**Testimony of Ingrid Gillespie
Member, Connecticut Prevention Network and
Director of Prevention, Liberation Programs Inc.
In Support of**

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

Public Health Committee, February 1st 2021

Senator Daugherty Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Senator Hwang, Representative Somers, and Members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Ingrid Gillespie and I am Director of Prevention at Liberation Programs Inc. and here in my capacity today as a Member of the Connecticut Prevention Network (CPN). CPN is the coalition of the five Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations and other prevention organizations who are focused on substance abuse and mental health prevention efforts

I am here today to support S.B. No. 326 (RAISED) AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF FLAVORED CIGARETTES, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS.

It is well established that flavors influence perceptions of and experience with tobacco products, thus promoting their use.¹ This has long been recognized by the tobacco product industry, as for example, menthol cigarettes were marketed specifically to adolescents and racial minorities in the US.² Indeed, most youths who have ever used tobacco products began by using a flavored product.³ It follows that flavoring is used by the tobacco product industry as a mechanism to increase sales and profitability.

It is also well established that tobacco use is a significant threat to the health of users, and it creates a substantial burden for healthcare systems. Vaping of tobacco products is a more recent and growing issue. The 2019 Connecticut School Health Survey found that, among students in Grades 9 – 12, 44.8% had used a vaping product at least once.⁴ Short-term health risks have also been found with use of vaping,^{5,6} and long-term health risks may yet emerge. With respect to flavors, many agents used are considered safe for ingestion but lack safety data for inhalational exposures.⁷ Moreover, youth who vape may be more likely to initiate cigarette smoking.⁸

From this, it follows that the use of flavors in tobacco products poses a substantial risk with respect to the prevalence of use of tobacco products. In turn, it poses a risk to the health of individuals and to the financial “health” of the healthcare system.

In our role as members of the CPN, we provide direct and indirect services and products relating to prevention of substance use issues. That includes collaborations with a wide variety of community and statewide organizations for educational initiatives, harm-prevention measures, and legislative advocacy. As such, prevention of use of tobacco products forms an important focus of our work.

Risks of flavored tobacco products with respect to uptake of tobacco use are cited by the US FDA⁹ and include the following evidence:

- Multiple studies in both youth and young adults have found that flavors as a major reason for use of e-cigarettes, hookahs, cigars, menthol cigarettes, and smokeless tobacco
- The Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health (PATH) Study found that 81 percent of youth and 86 percent of young adults who ever used tobacco reported that the first tobacco product they used was flavored
- Flavored tobacco product use was 32% more common among adults who had ever smoked.
- Risk for progression to established smoking and dependence may be greater for those who start with menthol cigarettes.

I am available to answer any questions and look forward to working with the committee on this issue further.

Thank you for your consideration to this matter,

Ingrid Gillespie MSc

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