

January 31, 2021

Dear Members of the Public Health Committee of Connecticut General Assembly

My name is Violette Haldane, and I am from Hartford. I am the Executive Director of Advocacy to Legacy, Inc. whose mission is to educate individuals, families and communities how to advocate for themselves. I support bill S.B. No. 326 (RAISED) AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF FLAVORED CIGARETTES, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS.

My students choose to work on projects they feel are important to youth. We advocated for raising the age to purchase nicotine products (cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars, etc.) from 18 to 21. We are now advocating for prohibiting the sale of flavored cigarettes, tobacco products, electronic nicotine delivery systems and vapor products. We understand the impacts tobacco products, especially **menthol** products, have had on our Black and Brown communities. We have experienced first hand how these products impact our families, especially through death of relatives caused by lung cancer or respiratory or heart illnesses resulting from years of smoking menthol products.

Now we are facing a new generation of young people using flavored products because the taste is not harsh so it cannot be that "bad". We implore you to ban flavored nicotine products. Not only will it save lives, but also money in terms of healthcare costs.

During the Covid-19 pandemic please be aware of the tobacco related issues associated with COVID-19 and unhealthy lungs. Emerging studies suggest that COVID-19 patients who smoke have a higher chance of experiencing severe symptoms or death than non-smokers because smoking often leads to severe respiratory afflictions and is detrimental to the immune system. COVID-19 makes clear that our lung health is so tied to our public health and we have to collectively work towards a healthy America.

Thank you.

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