



Testimony of Kathy Hanley, Certified Prevention Specialist
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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 8, 2021

Senator Daugherty Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Senator Hwang, Representative Somers, and Members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Kathy Hanley, and I am a Behavioral Health Director with Western CT Coalition- the Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization in DMHAS Region 5, providing testimony 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 the negative effects of substance misuse and the promotion of mental wellness across Connecticut.

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.

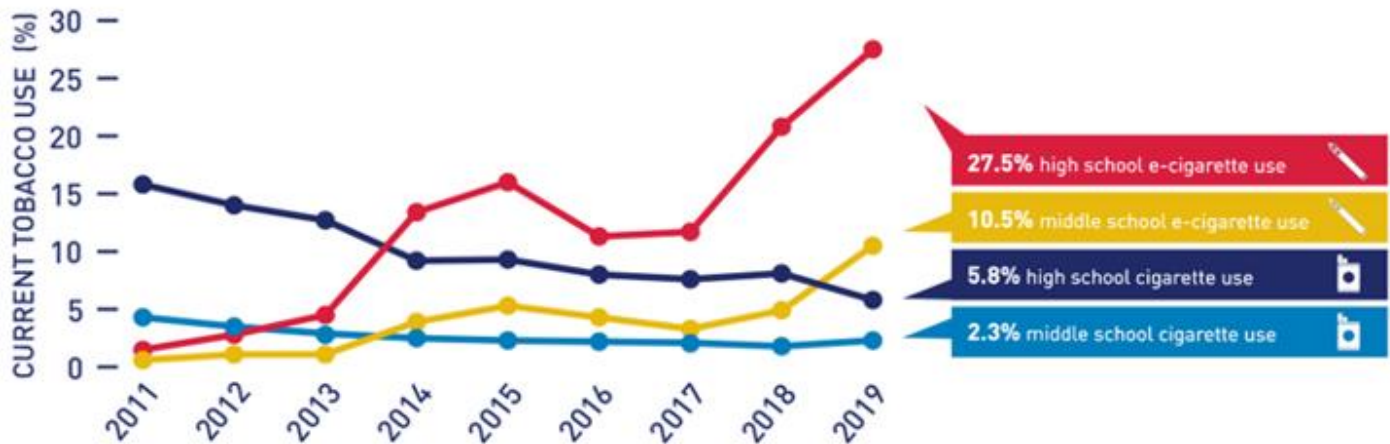
Flavors make tobacco products taste and smell better and can reduce the harshness to the mouth and throat.¹ The tobacco industry has used flavors to entice users, especially youth.

Efforts have been put forth at the federal, state, and local levels to ban some flavored tobacco products. The 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act banned sales of all flavors except menthol from traditional cigarettes. This was done to minimize the attractiveness of these products to children.

E-Cigarettes, hookah, smokeless tobacco, and cigars were exempted from this ban. In early 2020 the FDA banned flavored non-refillable pod-based e-liquids, again exempting menthol. In both these cases the industry adapted and so did users. S.B No. 326 will close the flavor ban loopholes in Connecticut.

Flavors have contributed to the “Vaping Epidemic” among youth. Youth rates of e-cigarette use have increased dramatically over the last few years.

¹ <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/products-ingredients-components/flavors-tobacco-products-what-are-potential-risks-and-benefits-public-health>



CENTER FOR TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Source: Data from 2019 National Youth Tobacco Survey; Cullen KA, Gentzke AS, Sawday MD, et al. E-cigarette Use Among Youth in the United States, 2019. JAMA. 2019



Flavors entice youth to begin smoking or vaping. Nicotine is a highly addictive substance and young people are more susceptible to addiction due to the nature of their under-developed brains. We have a new generation of young people addicted to nicotine. We hear from school counselors that students want to quit, but it is difficult, and there are not enough cessation supports available for e-cigarette users under the age of 18.

The Truth Initiative has put together a full report “Flavored Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults”. In the interest of time, I would like to bring the following to your attention:

- “Research shows that youth highly prefer sweet tastes and sweet odors, which may explain the appeal of flavored products, especially the most preferred flavor categories of fruit and candy. Youth and young adults perceive flavored tobacco products as more appealing, better tasting and less harmful than non-flavored tobacco products.”
- 81% of youth who use e-cigarettes reported flavoring as the primary reason for using a tobacco product.
- Youth and young adults use flavored tobacco products more than other age groups.
- Flavored e-cigs are often placed in retail settings near candy; another way to entice youth



The report is accessible online. <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/emerging-tobacco-products/flavored-tobacco-use-among-youth-and-young-adults>



Continued access to flavored e-cigarettes

Since the ban of flavored e-cigarette “pods”, like those made by Juul, youth have switched to menthol pods, tank-filled products, and disposables like **Puff Bars** which still come in a wide variety of fruity and candy flavors. According to another report from the Truth Initiative, By May 2020, menthol e-cigarettes accounted for more than half (51.6%) of e-cigarette sales and 37% of youth e-cigarette reported using menthol e-cigarettes. Disposable e-cigarette sales increased from 10.3% of the market in August 2019 to 19.8% in May

2020 and use of disposable e-cigarettes among high school students increased 1000% in that timeframe.²

Menthol Cigarettes and the African American Community

Lastly, I would like to point out the negative impact menthol cigarettes have had on African Americans in the U.S. From the CDC:³

- Historically, the marketing and promotion of menthol cigarettes have been targeted heavily toward African Americans through culturally tailored advertising images and messages.
- Over 7 out of 10 African American youth ages 12-17 years who smoke use menthol cigarettes.
- African American adults have the highest percentage of menthol cigarette use compared to other racial and ethnic groups.
- Menthol in cigarettes is thought to make harmful chemicals more easily absorbed in the body, likely because menthol makes it easier to inhale cigarette smoke.^{3,18}
- Some research shows that menthol cigarettes may be more addictive than non-menthol cigarettes.

Thank you for your time. The passing of this bill is part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce the harm of tobacco products in our communities. Please contact me if you have any questions- khanley@wctcoalition.org or 203-743-7741

² <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/emerging-tobacco-products/action-needed-e-cigarettes>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/disparities/african-americans/index.htm#:~:text=African%20American%20adults%20have%20the,other%20racial%20and%20ethnic%20groups.&text=Menthol%20in%20cigarettes%20is%20thought,easier%20to%20inhale%20cigarette%20smoke.>