

Public Health Committee
Public Hearing – February 8, 2021
SB 326 AA Prohibiting the Sale of Flavored Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine
Delivery Systems and Vapor Products
Erin E. Herring

My name is Erin E. Herring and I am a resident of Norwalk, CT. I would like to thank the leadership and members of the Public Health Committee for providing me with the opportunity to express my support for SB 326, which would prohibit the sale of all flavors, in all tobacco products, in all CT locations.

I am a mom with 3 beautiful children; two daughters and a son. My son was born with aortic stenosis and required six surgeries before he was a year old, the first one being when he was just weeks old. Needless to say, his early childhood was tenuous at best. By the grace of God, he is now 22 years old, and incredibly talented drummer and is going to school at the University of Western Connecticut. Unfortunately he became a cigarette smoker and now he vapes. His entire life, he would tell me “Mom, I will never smoke, I have a heart problem! I’m not that stupid”. It breaks my heart to say I guess he is that stupid and I am angry as hell about it. Please, please consider passing this bill. It has become an epidemic with young people and cost is not the issue; availability is. After watching my baby boy struggle to survive and to have him now smoking and vaping is horrible for me. I feel duped and defeated, all while these industries continue to profit from and target, not only young people, but the general population with flashy ads and a variety of flavors. In my opinion, it is both pathetic and unacceptable. In addition to my son, I had to recently watch my beloved brother pass away from esophageal cancer, caused in part by smoking. It was incredibly difficult and life changing to see that happen, primarily because he used tobacco most of this life. He lost that battle four months ago and I lost someone I loved a great deal.

In Connecticut alone, almost 20% of the adult population have and continue to use one form or another of a tobacco product in the past month, and almost 5,000 people in Connecticut die every year because of it! Healthcare costs continue to rise, and now with Covid, people who smoke/vape have a higher risk of dying as their respiratory system is now compromised, in an otherwise healthy person. By ignoring this information, and not taking action to this bill it will be a horrific disservice to the people, not only in Connecticut, but in the entire country.

Death from heart disease does not discriminate between what type of poison is inhaled or what method is used, what flavor it is, either regular or menthol, cigarettes or pen, they all are dangerous and will continue to decimate peoples families and loved ones. To that end, ALL tobacco products must remain in this bill when it is finally voted on. Please, do the right thing.

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my story and hear my plea. Don’t let this fall on deaf ears. Please...it is too important. If you love your family, do it for them, and everyone else in your life whom you love. Know that I depend on your voice being heard in full support of this bill...our future depends on it.

Erin E. Herring
erineherring@optimum.net