

February 8, 2021

Co-Chair Mary Daugherty Abrams

Co-Chair Jonathan Steinberg

Senator Heather Somers

Senator Tony Hwang

Representative William Petit

Members of the Public Health Committee:

I am submitting testimony in opposition to S.B. 326, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF FLAVORED CIGARETTES, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS.

I am opposed to this bill because customers of responsible retailers, who are of legal age should retain the ability to buy and consume the products of their choice. In a time of heightened sensitivity, policing the choices of law abiding and legally age appropriate adults, will come across unfavorable. Banning the freedom to choose tobacco products that have already been introduced to the market, will inadvertently contribute to the illegal sales of flavored tobacco, meanwhile make criminals of those individuals selling the product, and strip the collection of \$130 million in tax revenue from the state. According to the

Connecticut following the steps of many other states, are making progressive moves to legalize and decriminalize marijuana, it would seem contradictory to ban flavored tobacco, a product that has never been on the DEA's drug scheduling system and that is also not regulated under The Controlled Substances Act.

According to the Store Tracking Analytical Reporting System (STARS), FY 2020, flavored tobacco products were the choice of many adult consumers. STARS report's that in Connecticut, 41.3% of cigarettes are menthol. Bans do not eliminate demand. Taking it away will not break habits or prevent individuals from accessing these products elsewhere. Our Connecticut retailers take the proper precautions to not make the sale of tobacco products to underage individuals and for those that are not, following those laws and restrictions, actions should be taken.

I remember when I was in elementary school, there was a program called D.A.R.E.- Drug Abuse Resistance Education. This program highlighted the probable consequences of smoking, drinking, and other habit-forming vices that could cause harm. From there, it was left upon us to not submit to peer

pressure and make smart decisions for ourselves. The best way to go about limiting habit forming vices of adult products in the youth should be through education, not by government regulation. Our youth should be given fact-based information, and make their decisions based off of the evidence presented, this is the way to prepare them to become well-rounded individualistic thinking adults.

Please oppose S.B. 326, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF FLAVORED CIGARETTES, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS and support consumer choice and local retailers.

Sincerely,

Nickey Kollie