

7th February, 2021

To the Public Health Committee:

My name is Phoebe Lampos, and I am a sophomore at Lyme-Old Lyme High School. I will be testifying in support of SENATE BILL NO. 326 (RAISED) AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF FLAVORED CIGARETTES, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS.

As a student, I have witnessed how many teens and adolescents are lured into vaping by the appeal of flavored tobacco products. Flavored vapes are directed mostly toward younger students, beginning as early as 6th or 7th grade.

The Lymes' Youth Service Bureau conducts a survey every two years regarding the popularity of vaping and other substances in our schools. Last year's survey indicated that 16.8% of all students in 7-12th grade reported that they thought using E-cigs/Juuls isn't wrong at all. Among younger students, flavors are more popular because they make vaping seem safer.

This survey also showed that 45.5% of 12th grade students reported having used electronic cigarettes in their lifetime. Most of these students are enthusiastic about the various sweet flavors of the vape pods, and do not generally understand them to be tobacco products. Many students feel that vaping is not as harmful as cigarettes, which is in direct contravention of the fact that one vape is equivalent to 20 cigarettes.

Removing flavored vapes from the marketplace would clearly send the message that E-cigs/Juuls are tobacco products, which are just as harmful as cigarettes, if not more so. Furthermore, there is a culture based around these flavors among teens where different flavors are traded or sold almost as if they were trading cards or collectibles. Eliminating these sweet flavor options would prevent younger kids from beginning to vape.

Despite the fact that the law expressly prohibits people under 21 from purchasing vape products, 19.5% of all students in the 7-12th grades reported that it is very easy to obtain E-cigarettes and Juuls. These products are finding their way into our middle schools and high schools at an alarming rate. A large part of the reason for this spread is due to the allure of sweet flavors that appeal to kids. I strongly urge the committee to pass this bill banning flavored tobacco products. It will make our schools and communities safer, and kids less likely to engage in the harmful practice of vaping.

-Phoebe Lampos

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