

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

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My name is Greer Levy and I am a resident of Greenwich, 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.

My father has been a cigarette smoker since before he met my mother. Almost every road trip, grocery store run, or gas station run, he would have to stop to pick up a couple of packs of Marlboro Lights. So I see tobacco usage daily. I am aware of the absolute debilitating effect it has on people, and I have even seen it with my father. He has once even tried to use a device called a “Blu” to quit smoking. But he said the tobacco flavor that was supposed to replace the cigarettes tasted “like a cigar” and he started using the device on top of the cigarettes.

Additionally, I attend Greenwich High School, where vaping, or “Juuling” has run rampant. According to the CDC, “In 2020, nearly 7 of every 100 middle school students (6.7%) and about 23 of every 100 high school students (23.6%) reported current use of a tobacco product.” Not a single one of my friends have said they haven’t at least tried to vape once before. Whether they were peer pressured into it or not, who knows. But what I do know is that when the nicotine product is flavored, my friends are more prone to give in and give it a try. They pick the vapes with the best flavors because that is what makes ripping it a fun hobby. Licking a lollipop or even chewing a piece of gum has now turned into “ripping” (or inhaling vapor from) a Juul.

A typical scene with youth in Greenwich goes as follows. First, a person takes the device out of a bag. Then, out of curiosity, the surrounding youth ask what flavor the vape is. Then, they are offered the vape. This scene is a little too familiar to me. I was once the person asking what flavor it is, and yes, I did accept the offer. Just once. Because a coughing storm erupted and I never wanted my body to feel like that again. It was scary. Not only scary because I was having that startling reaction, but also because I realized that this is a device people around me use each day and fill their youthful lungs with. It has become so common. No longer are they used occasionally or at weekend parties, but they have now made their way into every nook and cranny of our daily lives.

It hurts me to know that a lot of my friends may be addicted their entire lives because they wanted to try what the flavor “pineapple lemonade” tasted like. I don’t want them to wind up being part of the more than 16 million Americans who are living with a disease caused by smoking. I don’t want them to end up with a crippling addiction like my father.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my voice in support of this bill. I believe in it, and you should too.

Greer Levy

Greenwich, CT