

CITY COUNCIL BRIDGEPORT

COUNCIL PRESIDENT AIDEE NIEVES
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT - NLC/HELO BOARD OF DIRECTORS



February 1, 2021

Testimony of Aidee Nieves, the President of the Bridgeport City Council, to the Public Health Committee in support of SB 326 An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Flavored Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems and Vapor Products

Greetings Co-Chair Senator Mary Daugherty Abrams, Co-Chair Jonathan Steinberg, Vice Chair Saud Anwar, Vice Chair Julie Kushner, Vice Chair Jillian Gilchrest and esteemed members of the Connecticut General Assembly Public Health Committee.

I am grateful to you for your public service on this committee and to your constituents and our state, especially during COVID-19.

I urge you to pass SB 326 to ban the sale of all flavored tobacco products statewide.

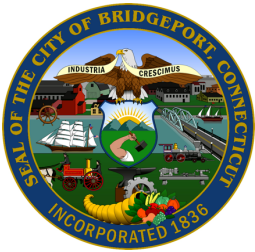
As a mother and a new grandmother in Bridgeport, where I serve as President of the City Council, I believe we must do everything we can to protect our kids' health. And that means all of our kids' health. Public health is the people's health. It is the community's health.

We must take real steps to reduce health disparities in a state where the census tract you grow up in can mean a difference of 19 years in your life expectancy. The pandemic has only magnified such shocking inequity.

That's why I'm helping to lead the passage of a similar policy in Bridgeport – to ban the sale of all flavored tobacco products there. We can't wait any longer – especially at a time when COVID-19 continues to disproportionately devastate the lungs and lives in my community.

Getting these products out of our community will make a meaningful difference in reducing health disparities and in making our communities healthier and more productive for generations to come.

The tobacco industry's products are the leading cause of preventable death in our country. To please its shareholders, Big Tobacco must find and hook replacement smokers. Flavored tobacco and e-cigarette products exist to do just that.



CITY COUNCIL BRIDGEPORT



COUNCIL PRESIDENT AIDEE NIEVES
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT - NLC/HELO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

When we talk about flavored tobacco products, let's not forget about the granddaddy of them all: menthol cigarettes. For decades Big Tobacco has targeted menthol cigarettes at predominantly Black neighborhoods, so that now 85% of African Americans who smoke cigarettes are smoking menthols. At the same time, African Americans are dying from heart disease, lung cancer, stroke and other tobacco-related diseases at rates far higher than non-African-Americans. Roughly 45,000 Black men and women are dying at the hands of Big Tobacco every single year.

I hear it from parents, educators, and coaches. Despite *Tobacco 21*, the kids still have easy access to flavored tobacco products. When you have a product like flavored tobacco whose whole purpose is to hook kids, you can't expect a limitation on access to prevent them from getting to their intended consumer. You have to eliminate their availability. That's what we're trying to do in Bridgeport and what I'm hoping you will do statewide by you passing SB 326 – to protect all the kids in our state from these tempting and addictive products.

We are going to do our part in Bridgeport, but I encourage you to take this effort and make it stronger. I don't want kids from my city to be able to get these products from friends or family or retailers in other cities 10 miles down the road. The sale of all flavored tobacco and flavored e-cigarette products should be prohibited everywhere in our state, as they are in Massachusetts, California and more than 100 municipalities across the nation. Doing so will have a powerful and lasting impact in reducing both youth nicotine addiction and tobacco-related health disparities.

Thank you,

Aidee Nieves, President
Bridgeport City Council
Bridgeport, CT 06608