

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**

Leigh Pechillo, President of the Central Connecticut Board of Directors
American Heart Association

My name is Leigh Pechillo and I am a resident of Southington. 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.

As the daughter of a father who began smoking at 13-years-old and continued the habit for 50 years, I do not want any other family to endure what mine has as the result of tobacco. He tried to quit on several occasions during his lifetime, but the addictive nature of tobacco made it extremely difficult. His smoking caused him to have significant cardiovascular disease that eventually cost him his life at 70-years-old, and while I don't know whether the secondhand smoke, I inhaled for more than 20 years living in the same house contributed to my heart disease, I know that it certainly didn't help.

Heart disease is the # 1 cause of death in Connecticut, and smoking is a leading risk factor for heart disease. With 480,000 state residents, or 18.4% of the adult population used some form of tobacco on one or more of the past thirty days, and an estimated 4,900 adults die in CT each year because of their own smoking. In CT, 900 kids under the age of 18 become new daily smokers each year.² 56,000 kids who are now under the age of 18 and alive in CT will ultimately die prematurely from smoking.

Although tobacco companies claim to be responding to adult tobacco users' demand for variety, flavored tobacco products play a key role in enticing new users, particularly kids, to a lifetime of addiction. This growing market for flavored tobacco products is undermining the nation's overall progress in reducing youth tobacco use. Using data from the 1999-2013 Youth Tobacco Surveys, a 2017 study analyzed the impact of the 2009 ban on characterizing flavors in cigarettes on youth tobacco use. The researchers found that cigarette use declined significantly after the ban, whereas cigar and pipe tobacco use significantly increased. Further, use of menthol cigarettes, the only remaining flavored cigarette, increased significantly after the ban.

According to FDA's Tobacco Product Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC): Menthol cigarettes increase the number of children who experiment with cigarettes and the number of children who become regular smokers, increasing overall youth smoking. Young people who initiate using menthol cigarettes are more likely to become addicted and become long-term daily smokers. The availability of menthol cigarettes reduces smoking cessation, especially among African Americans, and increases the overall prevalence of smoking among African Americans.

When you consider that the parts of the brain most responsible for decision making, impulse control, sensation seeking and susceptibility to peer pressure continue to develop

and change through young adulthood and adolescent brains are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of nicotine and nicotine addiction, it is no wonder that young smokers become lifetime smokers.

As the mother of two children, 17 and 14-years-old, I would hope our legislature would put a greater value on our children and their futures. I respectfully request your support for this important bill not only for the health of our children, but the health of the future of our state.

Sincerely,
Leigh Pechillo
Heart Survivor and President, Central Connecticut Board of Directors
American Heart Association
8 Surrey Circle
Southington, CT 06489
leigh.pechillo@cox.net