



**Testimony of Megan Purvis
Member, Connecticut Prevention Network and
Social Work Intern, The Hub**

In Support of

**Bill No. 326: An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Flavored Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems, and Vapor Products
Public Health Committee, February 1, 2020**

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, and Members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Megan Purvis, and I am a Social Work Intern for The Hub, the state-designated Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization (RBHAO) for Southwestern Connecticut. I am writing to you as a member of the Connecticut Prevention Network (CPN). CPN is the coalition of the five Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations and other prevention organizations who are focused on prevention in substance misuse and mental health prevention efforts

I am writing to **support Bill No. 326: An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Flavored Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems, and Vapor Products.**

The Hub supports and coordinates initiatives related to mental health, suicide, substance misuse, and problem gambling. One of our primary functions as the Region 1 RBHAO is collaborating with Local Prevention Councils (LPCs). Most of these organizations have recently been making efforts toward the prevention and cessation of vaping among youth in our communities. Throughout my time at The Hub, I have been largely focused on this issue and identifying ways in which we at The Hub can support our LPCs on this matter. Therefore, I am choosing to advocate for the passing of Bill No. 326 in hopes that limited availability of flavored tobacco products will decrease the rates at which adolescents start and continue vaping.

From 2011 to 2018, past 30-day use of e-cigarettes increased more than 13 times for high school students and more than 8 times for middle school students. As of 2018, 3.6 million middle and high school students in the U.S. were past 30-day e-cigarette users.

Big Tobacco has a long history of enticing younger audiences in order to increase the sales of their products. The availability of flavored tobacco products appeals to adolescents' curiosity and decreases their perception of the damage that these products can do. Flavored e-cigarettes paint a façade of harmlessness, which I believe largely contributes to the rising number of adolescents using e-cigarettes. When asked why they initially try vaping, teens often

say they do so out of curiosity. Therefore, it is important that these products are made to appear less appealing to youth. The prohibition of selling flavored tobacco products in Connecticut could play a vital role in doing so.

Incredible effort has been put into preventing teens from consuming nicotine and tobacco products. As a young millennial, I know very few people my age who smoke cigarettes or vape from devices containing nicotine. However, I have witnessed the increasing popularization of e-cigarettes among friends of mine who are just a few years younger than I am, all of whom began vaping in high school. It seems as though all the progress that has been made toward reducing nicotine and tobacco consumption among teens is now being erased.

I believe that our government's primary concern should be toward our youth's health and safety and that our legislation should reflect this accordingly. Therefore, it is extremely important to me that Bill No. 326 is passed in order to prohibit the sale of flavored tobacco products. This is a vital step in the prevention and cessation of adolescents using nicotine and tobacco products, as there is potential to protect teens in our communities right now and for many future generations.

I am available to answer any questions and look forward to working with the committee on this issue further.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Megan Purvis

BSW Intern, The Hub

meganp@thehubct.org