

Testimony in favor of SB326

My name is Kathleen Redmond and I am a volunteer with PAVe, Parents Against Vaping E-Cigarettes, here in Connecticut. I support the elimination of all flavored vaping products including menthol and all flavored tobacco products. This issue is deeply personal for me.

My son was 13 when he was first offered flavored e-cigarettes. Like so many teenagers, his desire to be accepted set him up for addiction. He vaped only flavored products. He was told they were not harmful. They came in candy flavors. How could they be?

His use of flavored e-cigarettes led to tension in our family. If I tried to take away his nicotine products, it was like I was trying to deprive him of oxygen. He was 15 and I had confiscated his Juul. He became so desperate that he held a large kitchen knife

against his throat, threatening to harm himself if I did not give it back. My husband called an ambulance. A child who had never shown any propensity for self-harm, threatened to kill himself over nicotine... He was hooked by these flavored nicotine pods and threatened to take his life when he could not have them. Let that sink in.

My son, now 19, is still hooked on flavored vapes and faces a lifelong battle with addiction to nicotine. Getting hooked at such a young age derailed a promising future. He needed nicotine to function. He could not get through a 40-minute high school class without it. He soon refused to go to school. Not allowed to vape in the house, he holed up in his room. He became isolated, anxious. What he thought was an avenue to social acceptance, became a solitary activity. Every day, he was focused only on where he was getting his next nicotine hit. If it were not for school going remote last Spring, he would not have been able to complete high school.

Given his low grades and lack of engagement, college is a deferred hope. He has difficulty getting through a part-time job because he needs smoke breaks, and what little money he makes is mostly spent on nicotine products; they are always menthol flavor. He has admitted that he hates the unflavored pods, and that he would have been less attracted to vaping had the pods not been flavored.

Nicotine is the most addictive substance on the planet and yet as a society, we had finally driven the smoking rates down, only to be blindsided by this new method of hooking another generation. These flavored pods have put our children at risk for cancer, vaping related illnesses, severe Covid, and mental health issues.

It is too late to save my son from this turmoil. But, it is not too late for other young people. Please do what you can to ensure that they are not robbed of a better life. Please do not let large

corporations yet again pick the pockets of our vulnerable youth,
stealing their health and happiness. Please pass SB326.