



PO Box 589, 59 Lyme Street • Old Lyme, CT 06371 • t. 860.434.7208 • f. 860.434-1580 • www.lysb.org

Testimony - S.B. 326 - AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF FLAVORED CIGARETTES, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS

Public Health Committee

February 8, 2021

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, and members of the Public Health Committee,

My name is Mary Seidner, the Executive Director of the Lymes' Youth Service Bureau serving the youth and families of Lyme and Old Lyme and I support the ban on flavors in tobacco products.

The story I'm about to share is about vaping in the Lyme/Old Lyme Community, however this story is happening in every community in Connecticut. In Old Lyme, our prevention coalition recently conducted a survey for all students in grades 6 through 12 to measure their attitudes and behaviors regarding alcohol and drugs. Our survey results show a shocking increase in e-cigarette use among youth over the last two years.

20% of surveyed youth report using electronic cigarettes in their lifetime. 20%! And by 12th grade 45.5% report using e-cigarettes in their lifetime. That's nearly half of the entire senior class! And the Old Lyme community is not alone. We know similar numbers can be found throughout the state.

In response to these shocking numbers, we created an educational intervention for students caught vaping at school. Our staff meets with each student individually to have a conversation about why and how often they vape, and we educate them on the health risks of using e-cigarettes/vapes, and the marketing tactics used by nicotine companies to target young people.

During these sessions, most of the students admit they are full-on addicted to nicotine and have no intention to quit. When we talk about flavors, nearly all of these students tell us that if vapes tasted like tobacco, they never would have started. The flavors make it fun and easy to start. The flavors draw them in, and nicotine hooks them.

Do names like mango, vanilla cream, and bubble gum sound harmful to you? No, of course not, and that's why kids underestimate the risk and the harm of these tobacco products.

When was the last time you adults consumed anything flavored like Cotton Candy? Bubble Gum? Cherry Blast? Blue Raspberry? I don't know many adults who would enjoy these flavors. But these flavors are very popular in vapes and they were created for one reason... to attract young people – not adults - and lure them in to get hooked on tobacco products. And now our children have become tobacco customers for life.

We have a public health crisis in Connecticut and our nation. Vaping is causing an epidemic of nicotine addiction in children. Tobacco is the leading cause of disease and death in the United States, and it's entirely preventable. Please protect our children. Please ban the flavors.

Thank you for your time today.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary V. Seidner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mary V. Seidner
Executive Director