

**TESTIMONY OF
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STAMFORD HEALTH
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Monday, February 1, 2021**

Good afternoon. Stamford Health appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **Senate Bill 326, An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Flavored Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems and Vapor Products.**

Stamford Health is a comprehensive, independent non-profit health care system that serves a region of approximately 650,000 people. We employ more than 3,600 people, making us the largest employer in the city of Stamford and one of the largest in Fairfield County. Beyond the lifesaving care we provide 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, we contribute more than \$1 billion to our state and local economy and provide more than \$80 million in uncompensated care to the residents that need it most. We are committed to providing friendly, personal care coupled with the most sophisticated services to all residents of lower Fairfield County.

Senate Bill 326 would prohibit the sale of flavored cigarette and tobacco products and flavored electronic nicotine delivery systems and flavored vapor products.

As an organization dedicated to the health and well-being of our communities, Stamford Health supports restricting the sale of nicotine products that cause, in the long-term, known illnesses. We also encourage restricting the sale of flavored products that tend to encourage young people to use nicotine products in the future. Research published as recently as mid-January shows that teens who vape are three times more likely to use cigarettes as they become adults (*Pediatrics*, January 11, 2021, online).

In addition to the long-term effects of smoking as an adult, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) advises that nicotine in tobacco products such as e-cigarettes impacts teens' brains by creating nicotine cravings. Use of e-cigarettes also can also negatively affect attention, learning and memory in developing teen brains.

On top of known effects, we are all aware of the almost 3,000 hospitalizations and 68 deaths of individuals in connection with vaping in 2019 and 2020. The very serious vaping

illness, known as Electronic Cigarette or Vaping Product-Use Associated Lung Injury (EVALI), suggests that while all of the negative health impacts of vaping may not be known, there are clear, significant risks associated with the activity.

Hospitals have an important role to play in addressing this public health problem. Every three years, hospitals must engage their community to determine top health needs in a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). One of the top findings in Stamford Health's 2019 CHNA for its catchment area was behavioral health including substance use disorders. The increase of young people using vaping products was singled out in as a particular concern among many who participated in surveys.

To help address this issue, Stamford Health has provided numerous public education sessions with Dr. Paul Sachs, a leading pulmonologist with the Stamford Health Medical Group, on the dangers and impacts of vaping. We also participate in a city-wide taskforce that creates strategies to eliminate vaping in youth.

The legislation before you would be an important step to helping curb this harmful activity. The FDA's 2020 National Youth Tobacco Survey showed an encouraging decrease in 2020 compared to 2019 of youth using tobacco products including e-cigarettes. The bad news is that 3.6 million youth still use e-cigarettes. Among those, 8 out of 10 report using flavored products. Almost a quarter of the 3.6 million use e-cigarettes daily, creating a future significant health problem that has human and economic costs.

Reversing this trend will be important for the health of our residents. For the above reasons, Stamford Health recommends that the Public Health Committee favorably report Senate Bill 326. Thank you for your consideration of our position.