

Cynthia Stremba
Parents Against Vaping e-cigarettes
LD 1215

Re: Bill LD 1215

Good afternoon,

My name is Cynthia Stremba. I'm representing Parents Against Vaping e-cigarettes or PAVe. We are a national organization of parent volunteers including here in Maine. Flavored e-cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products including menthol cigarettes pose serious risks to the health and safety of children. We urge you to support ending the sale of flavored e-cigarettes, menthol cigarettes and all other flavored tobacco products in Maine.

As a grassroots non-profit, we have spoken to hundreds of parents who are very involved in their children's lives.

Because vape products were created to fly under the radar of adults (the devices look like everyday school supplies and they smell good), parents are often unaware that their children are vaping until they're already addicted. E-cigarettes are just too easy to use and flavors mask the fact that they are so highly addictive. They taste good and look cool and fun and they are promoted all over youth oriented social media and marketed next to candy in stores.

Children spend almost a third of their waking hours in school where vaping has become a social activity and where the peer pressure to try the different vape flavors is intense.

Vapes offer an opportunity for kids to fit in. An opportunity among kids to share and try the many different flavors (over 15,000!) available. Flavors like cotton candy and menthol. The latter includes "iced" and "cool" flavors, which have become the most popular among youth due to the easy smoking and highly addictive qualities.

The nicotine salt technology used is itself highly addictive, and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to its effects. Symptoms of addiction can appear within weeks or days after occasional smoking begins.

Vaping increases inflammation throughout the body raising the risk of negative lung and brain affects along with cardiovascular issues and the recent discovery of serious negative impact on oral health. Children who vape are 4-5 times more likely to migrate to combustible cigarettes - most often, menthol cigarettes.

Vapes are relatively new products, and time will continue to reveal just how serious the long term health impacts will be on our children - our future leaders - as they move into adulthood. The tobacco industry is very aware that 90% of tobacco use begins by the age of 18 and spends millions in Maine to attract teens. Sadly, use can seriously damage a child's health before they reach adulthood.

As a state, we are all bearing the burden of the current and future health care costs associated with keeping flavored vape products on the market. Children who have only been on this earth for 10, 12, 15 or 18 years cannot be expected to think of the long term consequences of what they generally think are harmless products. We ask that Lawmakers think about how kids look at the world and support parents who are doing their best to protect their kids in light of the many current day temptations seducing all of our children.

In the words of one parent, "We need help! The nightmare of my older son's nicotine vaping addiction began when he was in middle school and he was approx. 12 years old.

Over the past five years, we have punished, confiscated, discussed, shown empathy and tried everything in our power to help our son to quit and yet we have still been unsuccessful in getting our now 19 year old to quit vaping!"

Eliminating the sales of flavored e-cigarettes and menthol cigarettes is an opportunity for Maine to protect the health and safety of children. And to acknowledge the devastating effects and costs of nicotine addiction. Addiction that is brought on by the tobacco and vape industry and their targeting of children with flavors - including menthol - all to ensure they have life long customers.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Cynthia Stremba
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