

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Kaden Schneider. I am a resident of Brunswick and a junior at Brunswick High School. I am here to testify in support of LD 1215 and ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products.

I started hearing about kids vaping when I was in 7th grade. Back then, only a few people I knew did it, but, now, it is far more prevalent. It seems like three-quarters of the high school population has at least tried vaping. Vaping doesn't discriminate – there are kids that are part of all of the stereotypical high school groups that do it. Whenever you are walking through the halls to class, you can see the same group of kids going in and out of the bathroom and you know they are vaping. These kids can hardly make it through one class without needing to use their or their friend's vape. I see kids who need to leave class in the middle to do it. I know kids who are addicted to vaping and because so many kids are, it just seems normal at this point. It's gotten so bad that school has changed policy so you can't leave class the first or last 15 minutes to go to the bathroom to try to cut down on vaping.

I'm lucky enough to have a friend group where no one vapes, but it still affects us. We often talk about going to the bathroom and seeing kids do it or going to all of the bathrooms in the school to try to find one where there is no one vaping. Kids shouldn't have to go to this much trouble just to use the bathroom without being worried about inhaling second-hand smoke. I have asthma and when I was younger, I would be afraid to use the bathroom at school because I was nervous the kids' vaping would trigger my asthma.

This is a 700 billion dollar industry – put that into perspective – that's more than the net worth of the 4 richest people on earth added together. Tobacco use is so intertwined in pop culture – the industry is shelling out big bucks to get famous people to promote their brand and get more kids addicted. Kids talk about seeing vaping and smoking on YouTube, you can see it on Netflix shows, you hear about it in the lyrics of popular songs. Last year, I was looking through a Sports Illustrated magazine and the cover article contained a two-page photo of one of the best NFL players laying on a hammock across a pool smoking a cigar with the article title "Life at the Top."

Most kids vape or smoke because they have a friend who offers it to them, they are curious about trying it and think it's no big deal. Most wouldn't be using if it didn't taste good. When they start using, many of them have trouble stopping.

I don't want any of my classmates to get sick or die just because they picked up a vape in junior high or high school to fit in. Please vote to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products.