

Testimony in Favor of LD 1550 - An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products

My name is Quilla Flanigan-Burt. I am a 20 year old Tufts University college student who lives in Southern Maine. I have witnessed first hand how vaping and e-cigarettes have affected both my friends and family. I often joke we were the generation who were supposed to finally kill the nicotine industry- that is, we were until they made it taste like mangos.

For me, there is something particularly sinister about addictive and toxic chemicals wrapped in brightly colored packaging and fruity flavors- at least typical cigarettes and tobacco products SMELL like they are bad for you. Flavored nicotine has appealed to kids for just the opposite reason- it tastes and smells good, and if it's that good, how can it be that bad?

This fall, I conducted an anonymous survey amongst my friends and peers, gathering 58 responses from Maine kids, both high school and college age who vaped. Out of 58 kids, 49 had tried to quit on their own, but couldn't. Upwards of 40 responded they began vaping as a social event, and were now addicted. Reading through responses, I saw the words of kids who were truly struggling.

Out of my 10 question survey, one asked how many kids also smoked cigarettes, 7 out of 58 responded yes, but the majority responded something along the lines of "never, cigarettes are GROSS, DISGUSTING, YUCKY".

The line which stood between vaping and tobacco cigarettes was just that- one was gross, disgusting and yucky, and the other was a fun fruit flavor that didn't taste at all like a cigarette. Fruit flavors make nicotine and chemical inhalation appealing, whereas natural tobacco flavor doesn't. I have heard from numerous friends how grossed out they are to "have to" use a tobacco flavored pod in their juul, or otherwise use tobacco flavored products.

By appealing to taste and smell, it is easier for kids to forget (or never question) how nicotine products affect their health and cause addiction. Please ban the sale of flavored tobacco products to help kids not get hooked!