

My name is Jake Warn and I'm a 21-year-old from Winslow. I am writing in support of LD 1550 – ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products. I'd like to share my story - what I experienced in high school and I'm now seeing in college.

E-cigarettes have completely taken over the school systems, from junior high through college. When I was in high school, the bathrooms were filled with 10- 12 kids every break between classes using their e-cig product. Young adults and teens don't see the connection between e-products and cigarettes and how nicotine addiction can take over. E-cig products like Juul have just as much nicotine within a 'pod' as a pack of cigarettes. These small juice cartridges that contain nicotine, flavoring and chemicals are much more easily consumed than a pack of cigarettes, and much more quickly. It's uncommon for a pod to last a full day. If you ask anyone why they use it, it's because it tastes good. My favorite vape flavor was a Red Bull flavor called Energetic Bull. It's been 3 years and I can still taste it every time I think about it. After a few weeks of using these devices, it becomes part of your life. Without even realizing it, you are addicted. It's such the norm now, it's like having a cell phone.

All groups are using e-products, from athletes, nerds, weirdos and motor heads. I had always had an e-cig product throughout high school. A local vape shop would have game night at their vape lounge. It would be filled with high schoolers and young adults trying the new flavors. We are the consumer for this product, and it was geared towards us, the new consumers. I would go there all the time at 16 and 17 with no issue. E-cig and Juul products were at our constant fingertips.

Once I got to college, where I was playing for an intense D2 soccer program, I bought my first Juul. The device is indestructible, and everyone had one. All around campus you can find used cartridges scattered on the ground like cigarette butts, and students ripping on their Juul while walking to class. I didn't think it would become a problem for me since I was a driven college athlete, and while I knew my parents were very concerned about me using e-cigarettes, I would dismiss their concern. I had done my research and even told my parents that. But by the middle of the fall season, I was buying two packs per week at Cumberland Farms, (8 pods total - per week) and it had completely taken over my life. I was spending much more than my budget for the week on this product. I started to rely on my Juul for my daily tasks, and I couldn't go without because it would affect my mood and attitude too much to be productive at the level I needed to be at. I was anxious, irritable and very angry, and this is in addition to the physical effects, not feeling healthy and coughing.

My parents scheduled a doctor's appointment for me, and I was not on board. During this visit I quickly learned this is not something you can do on your own without help. That first step made me want to win this battle. I transferred schools and focused on getting healthy. 2 years later I am still working on it and realize it's a part of who I am now. The dangers and addiction to nicotine are just now being recognized by my age group and I am seeing firsthand how my friends don't even try to stop. It helps to share my story and talk with professionals and friends, but I wish I had never picked up an e-product.

I am watching adults pointing the finger at each other. Parents aren't doing their job, teachers aren't paying attention, consequences aren't strict enough. But I think lawmakers let their guard down to tobacco companies. Now my generation is paying the price. There was nothing out there educating me on the dangers of e-cigarettes and Juul and the tobacco industry took advantage of that. There was nothing telling me and my peers that nicotine is a highly addictive drug and we could be setting ourselves up for a lifetime of addiction. We knew cigarettes were bad for you, tasted awful and smelled terrible. I would have never smoked a cigarette. I didn't view e-cigarettes as a tobacco product, and I was wrong. Ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products is a big step in preventing kids from starting and will encourage users to quit. You have a chance to do something right now to take one step in the right direction. Believe me this cannot wait, this is addiction. We need to stop this problem before it gets worse or a whole generation will be paying the price.