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RB326 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF FLAVORED CIGARETTES, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS.

Written Testimony Presented to the Public Health Committee

February 1, 2021

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

On behalf of the physicians and physicians-in-training of the Connecticut ENT Society, an organization representing over 90% of the otolaryngologists practicing in Connecticut, we thank you for the opportunity to provide this supporting testimony on **RB 326 An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Flavored Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems and Vapor Products.**

The Connecticut ENT Society **strongly supports RB326**. The harmful impact of tobacco and nicotine-based products has been repeatedly confirmed by medical organizations and regulatory bodies. The Center for Disease Control asserts that "smoking leads to disease and disability and harms nearly every organ of the body. More than 16 million Americans are living with a disease caused by smoking. For every person who dies because of smoking, at least 30 people live with a serious smoking-related illness. Smoking causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung diseases, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Smoking also increases risk for tuberculosis, certain eye diseases, and problems of the immune system, including rheumatoid arthritis."

"Secondhand smoke exposure contributes to approximately 41,000 deaths among nonsmoking adults and 400 deaths in infants each year. Secondhand smoke causes stroke, lung cancer, and coronary heart disease in adults. Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are at increased risk for sudden infant death syndrome, acute respiratory infections, middle ear disease, more severe asthma, respiratory symptoms, and slowed lung growth."

In our Otolaryngological patients, smoking causes severe inflammation of our upper respiratory tract causing nasal inflammation and congestion, acute and chronic sinusitis, and laryngeal/vocal fold inflammatory polyps and cancers.

The American Vaping Association supports the use of flavoring citing data prior to 2017 and 2018 in opposition to RB 326. It is critical that more recent data and evidence be taken into account when considering the health hazards of smoking. The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Enforcement Priorities for Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) and Other Deemed Products on the Market Without Premarket Authorization was released in April 2020, and issued a FINAL GUIDANCE that prioritizes enforcement against:

(1) Flavored, cartridge-based ENDS products (except for tobacco- or menthol-flavored products);
(2) All other ENDS products for which the manufacturer has failed to take (or is failing to take) adequate measures to prevent minors' access; and
(3) Any ENDS products targeted to, or whose marketing is likely to promote use by, minors.

FDA guidance and priorities were based on the following alarming tends:

- "Current e-cigarette use had increased considerably among U.S. middle and high school students during 2017-2018 reversing a decline in e-cigarette use that had been observed in recent years…Among high school students, current e-cigarette use had increased by 78 percent in the past year (from 11.7 percent in 2017 to 20.8 percent in 2018, while among middle school students, current e-cigarette use had increased by 48 percent (from 3.3 percent in 2017 to 4.9 percent in 2018)".

- “Frequent use among high school students (defined as use on ≥ 20 of the past 30 days) also had increased, from 20.0 percent in 2017 to 27.7 percent in 2018”.
- “In 2019, two of the largest surveys of tobacco use among youth found that e-cigarette use has hit the highest levels ever recorded.”
- “As of December 17, 2019, there have been approximately 2,506 reported cases of hospitalizations for lung injuries associated with use of vaping products … including 54 confirmed deaths.”

This FDA guidance was driven by public health concerns of the ENDS products since it has been well established that repeated exposure to nicotine during adolescence induces long-lasting changes in brain regions involved in addiction, attention, learning, and memory.

It is also important to assess the impact of ENDS during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recently completed studies (D. Li et al. The association between statewide vaping prevalence and COVID-19. Preventive Medicine Reports v. 20, December 2020, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2020.101254) demonstrated positive associations between number of vapers in a given State and daily COVID-19 cases and deaths in that State, suggesting that vapers may have a greater susceptibility to COVID-19 cases and deaths.

Using an evidenced-based approach, the Connecticut ENT Society strongly supports RB ~~236~~ 326 and emphasizes that we view all tobacco- and nicotine-based products as hazardous to the health of individuals of all age groups. We strongly recommend ~~strengthening~~ fortifying regulations that will substantially restrict consumption of ~~the said~~ these harmful products.

Respectfully,

Connecticut Ear, Nose and Throat Society

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