

Testimony supporting Raised House Bill 7200, An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems and Vapor Products to Persons Under Age Twenty-one

March 12, 2019

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Carrie Firestone and I am part of a Farmington Valley community coalition of parents and educators urging comprehensive action to combat the teen vaping crisis.

I've interviewed a number of teens to find out where they are accessing their vaping products. They are purchasing these products at an inflated rate on school buses and in middle school and high school bathrooms from seniors who have the ability to buy from local gas stations and vape shops. Many parents suspected their teens have been able to buy from the local gas stations without ID, so I paid a visit to the manager of our local Shell station. The encounter was enlightening.

The manager told me they do ID young people who try to buy tobacco products. However, eighteen-year-olds patronize the store daily to purchase large quantities of vaping products (often spending \$300 or more). The manager sees these teens walk out to the parking lot and conduct "deals" with underage peers. It's likely these buyers are also distributing products to much younger kids in school bathrooms and on the buses.

I strongly believe raising the buying age of tobacco products to 21 will create a much-needed "buffer zone" that will prevent older high school students from accessing and distributing vaping products to children as young as eleven years old.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and hard work on this issue.

Sincerely,

Carrie Firestone

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