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- **Testimony of Ingrid Gillespie**
Executive Director, Communities 4 Action Inc.
 - **Member of the Connecticut Prevention Network**
 - *In regards to*

Governor's Bill No. 5020

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING PUBLIC HEALTH

My name is Ingrid Gillespie and I am testifying representing members of the Communities 4 Action, a regional alliance focused on addressing behavioral health and related risky behaviors including use of tobacco products. I am also a member of the CT Prevention Network (CPN) whose members include Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations (RBHAOs) and other organizations. We are focused on substance abuse, mental health, and gambling prevention efforts and collectively work with all 169 towns in Connecticut.

We are in support of the Governor's Bill No 5020 that proposes a number of strategies to address the alarming rate of e-cigarette use amongst youth. The 2017 CT Youth Tobacco survey indicated that 14.7% of high school students in Connecticut used e-cigarettes on at least one day in the past 30 days. Consider the following critical consequences of e-cigarette use:

- The use of e-cigarettes, particularly those with high levels of nicotine, places youth at *risk for developing nicotine addiction.*
- Nicotine exposure during adolescence *could harm brain development.*
- Youth who use e-cigarettes are more likely to start smoking cigarettes. According to NIDA ,30.7 percent of e-cig users started smoking within 6 months compared with 8.1 percent of non-users started smoking.
- *E-cigarette aerosol may expose users to other harmful substances* such as heavy metals, volatile organic compounds, and ultraline particles that could harm the lungs.
- **As of December 3, 2019**, a total of 2,291 cases of hospitalized e-cigarette, or vaping, product use-associated lung injury (EVALI) have been reported to the CDC from 50 states, the District of Columbia, and two U.S. territories (Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands).
- **As of Oct 10, 2019**- 25 cases have been reported in CT.

There are a number of strategies outlined in this bill including: •Adding electronic cigarettes to the health curriculum of public schools, •Putting a cap on the nicotine content of products and •Significantly increasing the fines to retailers for selling products to people under 21. All are important strategies to reduce demand through increasing perception of risk and reducing access to e-cigarettes.

But I would like to focus on the proposed recommendation to prohibit the sale of all flavored e-cigarette products. While it does not prohibit all flavored tobacco products, this recommendation as outlined in the Governor's bill does support one of the major contributors to youth e-cigarette use as noted by the following:

- A government study found that **81 percent of kids who have ever used tobacco products started with a flavored product**, including 81 percent who have ever tried e-cigarettes and 65 percent who have ever tried cigars.
- **Youth also cite flavors as a major reason for their current use of non-cigarette tobacco products**, with *81.5 percent of youth e-cigarette users and 73.8 percent of youth cigar users saying they used the product "because they come in flavors I like."*

Source: www.tobaccofreekids.org

Prohibiting the sale of flavored e-cigarette use would positively impact the youth e-cigarette use in CT and the health consequences that are already being reported. We have all worked very hard to reduce smoking tobacco amongst our youth and we need to put at least the same effort into reducing e-cigarette use.

Thank you,



Ingrid Gillespie
Communities 4 Action Inc
Member of Ct Prevention Network