

TESTIMONY OF ANDREW O'BRIGHT
SMOKE FREE ALTERNATIVES TRADE ASSOICATION PRESIDENT,
CT CHAPTER
HOUSE BILL 5020
MARCH 6 2020

Good afternoon Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Senator Somers, Representative Petit and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Andrew O'Bright and I am here today representing the CT Chapter of SFATA, the Smoke Free Alternatives Trade Association.

I would like to start by ensuring this committee that those of us here before you, representing the vapor industry, are on your side and would like to work with you on regulations in the vape industry. There are many factors that have brought us to this point and while those of us sitting before you have not contributed to the issues at hand, we are here to help you resolve them at costs to our businesses because we know it is what's best for our community as a whole.

Last year thousands were sickened and hundreds died from an outbreak of EVALI. We were loud and stood strong knowing that our industry had nothing to do with this outbreak and the truth has finally come out some 9 months after our businesses voiced the true culprits. This had everything to do with black market THC products and nothing to do with legal, adult only, nicotine vapor products. The next issue hit at seemingly the same moment with the 2019 NYTS results showing yet another increase in teen experimentation. We may sit in front of you and explain the peer review of this study and how the numbers show nothing more than a misunderstanding from surveyors and underage youth, and how THC vaping and nicotine vaping are 2 very different products, but I would rather we focus on helping you, as the legislators, make effective regulations that will help the teen usage issue put forth to you by your constituents.

I believe the bill before you is too stringent in an outright flavor ban, and too lax in a 35mg/mL nicotine cap. The drivers of youth usage, from the NYTS results, show curiosity and nicotine buzz to be the, exponentially, leading factors in youth uptake. Flavors are a far 4th in the reasons associated with teens. Meaning, that the flavors on the market are absolutely critical for the tens of thousands of adult

vapers in this state to use to stay off combustible tobacco, currently claiming the lives of thousands of your constituents this year. So let's help by moving flavors to adult only establishments where you must be 21 to enter the facility to ensure that the same place every smoker in this building started, underage, does not gain access to lifesaving adult only products.

With regard to a nicotine cap, we have been on board with this idea for the last 2 sessions. We suggest lowering the nicotine cap to 29mg/mL so that FDA registered products at 30 and 50mg/mL will not find their way into the hands of our youth.

There is an absolute and irrefutable health crisis in CT and across our nation, the death of half a million people in 2020 due to preventable disease. We are, unequivocally, throwing the baby out with the bathwater if we remove flavors from the hands of adults because we cannot work together to make effective legislation that keeps these products out of the hands of youth.

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