



February 9, 2016

Dear Legislator,

I am writing to share my concerns about the unintended consequences of H.171, a bill to prohibit the use of electronic cigarettes in the same places in which the use of lighted tobacco products is banned.

Restricting the use of e-cigarettes, known as “vaping” for the vapor they emit, would undermine the very public health goal of this law- which is to reduce the harm from tobacco use.

First, it wouldn’t reduce exposure to environmental smoke, better known as second-hand smoke, because there is no smoke. There isn’t even any first-hand smoke.

More important, a ban on vaping in public places would damage public health because it would make e-cigarettes a less convenient alternative to cigarette smoking. It would also send the implicit (and incorrect) message that they are also equally dangerous, not only to the user, but to those exposed to the vapor.

An indoor air study conducted in 2011 by New York’s Clarkson University found “no significant risk for bystanders for cancer or non-cancer risk for either children or adults as a result of exposure to e-cigarette vapor.” Numerous studies since 2011 have confirmed these findings. Further, since 2011, product standards for the vast majority of products have improved exponentially.

It is critical to note that e-cigarettes are attractive alternatives to adult smokers, in part because, like the FDA-approved gum and patch, they provide nicotine. Nicotine, while highly addictive, is not particularly harmful at the levels at which it is consumed.

While nobody should initiate use of any nicotine products, be they pharmaceutical, e-cigarettes or certainly tobacco-burning cigarettes, Vermont legislators should be aware that it’s not the nicotine that makes cigarettes dangerous. It’s the burning tobacco that makes traditional cigarettes harmful to users and those exposed to the smoke. E-cigarettes contain no tobacco.

E-cigarette critics rely on the flimsy argument that vaping “normalizes” smoking because people may think vaping is smoking. That’s nonsense. Vaping actually normalizes not smoking.

When thinking about e-cigarette regulations, the Legislature should remember what doctors are taught: First, do no harm.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Stier", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jeff Stier

Director, Risk Analysis Division
National Center for Public Policy Research