



January 24, 2019

To: House Committee on Human Services
From: Tina Zuk, Government Relations Director, VT
Subj: H.26

Our organization supports H.26 as a prevention tool to limit access to e-cigarettes to youth in Vermont, along with legislation to raise the sales age of tobacco products and e-cigarettes. These devices are easy to get and are creating an addiction in youths that many don't know how to overcome.

- Use of e-cigarettes, including the popular JUUL has increased dramatically in Vermont and the nation. With the advent of e-cigarettes, 25% of Vermont youths now use some form of tobacco.¹ Nationally, e-cigarette use by youth increased 78% last year.²
- Using e-cigarettes has been shown to increase the likelihood of smoking traditional cigarettes among young people, raising concerns that e-cigarettes are acting as nicotine entry products that may lead to use of more dangerous products. A 2018 report from the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine concluded that “there is substantial evidence that e-cigarette increases the risk of ever using combustible tobacco cigarettes among youth and young adults.”
- Researchers at Dartmouth’s Norris Cotton Cancer Center have also found that e-cigarettes may facilitate smoking initiation in adolescents. According to the study, “E-cigarettes could lead to more than 1.5 million years of life lost because their use could substantially increase the number of adolescents and young adults who eventually become cigarette smokers.”³
- Many youths are also unaware that the devices contain nicotine which has a powerful and negative effect on their developing brains. A recent study found that 98.7 percent of all e-cigarettes sold at convenience stores, supermarkets and similar outlets contain nicotine. Yet many youths are unaware that the products they’re using contain nicotine. In fact, 60 percent of teens incorrectly reported e-cigarettes being comprised of mostly flavoring.⁴ A 2017 study by the Truth Initiative Schroeder Institute® found that 63 percent of JUUL users did not know that this product always contains nicotine.
- The rise in the popularity of e-cigarettes that can deliver levels of nicotine similar to combustible cigarettes is causing concern about the potential risks of addiction not just to the device itself. There is evidence that the effect of nicotine on developing brains may result in nicotine addiction and greater vulnerability to other drugs as well. Local addiction expert, John Hughes, MD, Professor, UVM, Dept. of Psychiatry & Psychological Science, Vermont Center on Health and Behavior, calls this the Blue Bonnet effect. Like butter that makes other foods taste good, nicotine in e-cigarettes may increase the addiction for other drugs.

¹ Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2017

² CDC, Notes from the Field: Use of Electronic Cigarettes and Any Tobacco Product Among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2011–2018; November 16, 2018 / 67(45);1276–1277.

Quantifying population-level health benefits and harms of e-cigarette use in the United States.

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0193328>

⁴ <https://truthinitiative.org/news/e-cigarettes-facts-stats-and-regulations>