

January 30, 2020

Senate Health and Welfare Committee
State of Vermont
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Sent via e-mail to: doatley@leg.state.vt.us

Dear Chair Lyons:

The Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems has not requested to testify on S.288 because we know that committee time is precious and we felt that representatives from the American Cancer Society, the Vermont Medical Society, the American Lung Association, and students from our own local high schools have made a persuasive case in support of the bill. I am compelled, however, to chime in on the issue not only as a representative of hospitals, but as a former smoker myself.

I started smoking in college thinking it would be fun for a minute. Instead I continued to smoke for the next 20 years. Nicotine addiction is intense, and it happens fast. I tried to quit many times, as most smokers do. It is difficult to explain to nonsmokers the agony of not feeding the addiction—and of ending it. And that is why I have become so concerned lately about the skyrocketing popularity of vaping and e-cigarettes among children and teenagers, in large part due to enticing flavors such as mango and mint.

Our hospitals share this concern. Gifford Medical Center partnered with law enforcement and schools on a vaping prevention program and the UVM Health Network has offered health care provider education on the dangers of vaping and e-cigarettes. While these efforts are effective, they only go so far. Banning flavored tobacco with S.288 will help ensure that today's teenagers do not become tomorrow's smokers and vapers.

Sincerely,



Jeff Tieman
President & CEO
Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems