

Good morning and thank you for allowing me to be in this space today. My name is Maria Davies and I am a parent of two children in the Stowe School District. One is a High School Senior and the other is a Middle Schooler.

Why am here?

Approximately 3 years ago my kids came home on bus and they told my husband and I that some kids on the bus were vaping. They were familiar with what vaping was which left us a concerned because we were not sure if they actually knew what a vape was. We were also concerned and alarmed that this was taking place on the bus, and kids of all ages were on the bus being exposed. So I asked the principals at the High and Middle School if they were seeing the kids vaping at school, or on school grounds. The principal at the High School was Chris Oleks and at the Middle School it is Dan Morrison. Both principals were receptive to my inquiries and did indicate that they were seeing an uptick in kids vaping and that they were confiscating the devices as they found them. Which made me concerned for other reasons too. I wondered where the confiscated devices were going because they certainly did not belong in the landfill as they contained batteries, metals and nicotine that was highly concentrated.

I then wondered how I could highlight to parents what the dangers were around e-cigarettes and vaping so they could in turn help their youth. I started collaborating with Healthy Lamoille Valley, I knew I needed to get better educated on the issue at hand. HLV is a coalition of community organizations and individuals working collaboratively to reduce youth substance misuse and encourage youth to make substance free healthy choices. I needed to educate myself on what these healthier choices were before I can help other parents understand what they were seeing in their kids and what their kids were doing. I asked for data and with the help of HLV and some really great principals and educators we were able to organize a Parent Series for Youth and their Parents to come and learn about what a vape was, what an e-cigarette was, how these devices that we see today and are so easily concealed were getting more sophisticated and how the tobacco companies were targeting our youth. We organized a presenter who took us through the history of the vape and the kids and their parents learned about what their kids were inhaling when they vape. We showed parents how small the devices were and how kids could easily hide them or charge them with their school computers. Parents were in awe how much their youth knew about the devices our presenter brought in, and youth were in awe how much they did not know around dangers of vaping. Although youth knew what a Juul was and the various flavors that were available they did not know what they were doing when they vaped. We explained that vaping products are battery-operated devices that deliver nicotine and flavorings without burning tobacco. In most products, puffing activates the battery-powered heating device, which vaporizes the liquid in the cartridge. The resulting vapor is then inhaled (called “vaping”).

We then held a few more Parent Series which addressed how the youth brain was not fully developed until age 25 and was therefore easily susceptible to getting addicted to a substance if the youth is exposed to a substance earlier on in his or her life. Here is some more data that is as a result of the Youth Behavioral Survey that the Dept of Health puts in place every few years.

### YRBS data Youth Risk Behavior Survey Lamoille County

- Lamoille High Schoolers reported a 17% increase in those who have tried an electronic vapor product from 2017-2019 (37%-54%) roughly similar to statewide results (state was 16% increase: 34%-50%)
- Of those High Schoolers surveyed we saw an increase of 16% from 2017-2019 of those who said they had used electronic vapor products in the past 30 days (13%-29%). A 14% increase (12%-26%) for the state.
- (A new question from 2019) of those surveyed 81% of High School students said that they thought their parents/ guardians feel it would be wrong or very wrong for them to use electronic vapor products. (VT 84%)
- In 2019, 33% of Lamoille county middle school and 76% of Lamoille county high school students said if they wanted electronic vapor products it would be sort of easy or very easy for them to get. 29%, 76% state, respectively
- Lamoille County high school students reported an increase of 8% of those who said they had every tried flavored tobacco products (24%-32%) VT: 6% (21%-27%)

Why is it important to me and why should this be important to you?

The bottom line is that it is clear to me and to many parents I speak to and come to me for guidance and assistance on how to help their kids stop vaping, that the tobacco industry is deliberately targeting our youth with flavors, (such as cherry, bubble gum, menthol) and this is a huge reason why our youth try vaping in the first place. They make this attractive to them, they are out to make money and do not care about our kids and their health, they just care about their bottom line. Vaping devices and flavors are colorful and strategically placed near areas where our youth go and pick up a bag of candy or gum and a treat at a shop. Our kids are being deliberately targeted and are getting hooked on these devices which release such toxic substances. This bill will help parents like me stop our youth from getting attracted to these dangerous products. We need your help, please help us we cannot and will not be able to do this without you.

Thank you for listening and for being open to being part of the solution we so desperately need.