

I don't want something else making the decisions for me anymore. I work as hard as anyone. I'm an employee, researcher, and full-time student at my school. I don't want to be tormented on my drives home anymore by thoughts of using tobacco to cope. I fight the urges the best I can. What am I supposed to do when friends walk in with various tobacco products ready to relieve me from my daily stresses? It's not enough to offer different resources to quit. We need to get rid of the source. It can't be an option in the first place.

My name is Marcus Aloisi, and I'm a senior at the University of Vermont. For my senior capstone project, I partnered with Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community to help launch their Tobacco Prevention Campaign, BHS Elevate. As a part of that campaign, I conducted Interviews with University of Vermont students regarding their experiences with tobacco products. I had no idea it would land me in front of legislators and representatives, talking to them about why they should pass bill S.18. Yet, here I am.

I've spent my whole life here in the green mountain state. I first heard about vaping when I was an 8th grader at Georgia Elementary and Middle

School. I attended South Burlington High School. There used to be a saying in the Library. "Office Hours". It was code for vaping in the bathroom. You could hear someone say it and watch seven or eight kids stand up and walk to the bathroom, almost hand in hand. We were virtually mocking the administrator's inability to stop it. You can take doors off stalls, install nicotine detectors, employ hallway monitors, or even restrict bathroom privileges. All of these strategies have direct adverse effects on young students' freedom to navigate their day. Not to mention, the drive to feed an addiction that started with a fruity flavor is a hard battle to fight. You have to eliminate the source of the problem itself. Flavored tobacco products.

Now I attend the University of Vermont. As part of the work for BHS Elevate, I interviewed other UVM students to see their experiences with flavored tobacco. While some students had never had experiences with the drug themselves, each person knew someone who had some struggle with the substance. I wrote an [Op-Ed published in newsletters](#) across Vermont and Northern New Hampshire. In that article, there's a quote from an anonymous UVM student that says, "Every time I do it, I can feel it in my

lungs, and I'm like 'oh, I need to not do this'. Now and then, I'll still hit a vape. But I can tell it's not good for you."

So many of my friends, myself included, have expressed just how hard it is to let go of this addictive drug during turmoil-filled parts of our lives. This is why I also encourage you to ban menthol cigarettes. I've seen many people transition around me from vaping to menthol cigarettes because they're cheaper and they're the "smoothest" of the cigarette products.

I don't think of this as a legal issue. I don't think of this as an issue of economics. I think of this as a public health issue. More importantly, it is an issue that revolves around our youth. I think of my friends' younger siblings. I think of how their older brothers and sisters sit in my living room, passing a vape around, saying, "I wish I didn't use this," just to take a puff and pass it to their right.

This is an addiction that's stimulated through bright advertisements and shiny packaging. Not passing this bill means you allow and actively promote the sustained addictive tendencies instilled in this generation into the future.

This is about making a better future for the children of this planet. We're already welcoming them into a wild and unpredictable world. The least we can do is invite them into a world prioritizing healthy habits and lifestyles.

I'll leave you with this. Last weekend, I attended the Vermont Youth Leadership Summit. It was a full circle moment for me as it was the same summit I had attended as an elementary student. I gave them a motivational talk and examples of how they can use their voices for change. The thing that stuck out with me most, though, was how much these kids no older than 8th grade already knew about flavored tobacco. They were practically experts on the flavors, the devices, and the costs, both price-wise and Healthwise. Most of those kids have faced peer pressure to start, many not knowing, in the beginning, the addictiveness behind the flavors. Some of the younger kids, as young as elementary age, are right on the verge where they're going to be faced with these choices to use or not use these highly addictive tobacco products in candy-colored packaging. I don't want them to be put into that position in the first place. Please stop making nicotine attractive to kids. Please support the end of the sale of all flavored products, including menthol.

Again, I am trying to make a better future for the people who come through this beautiful state and want to enjoy its aura for everything it's always been.

Thank you for your time today. I am committed to doing everything I can so that my friend's little brothers and sisters don't have to grapple with the same addiction that I and my friends have. Thank you again.