

April 8, 2026

Dear House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development,

We are students who are a part of the Champlain Valley Union High School (CVU) Our Voices eXposed (OVX) chapter. OVX is Vermont's youth tobacco and nicotine prevention group. We are writing in support of S.198, the "act relating to the regulation of tobacco products and tobacco substitutes." Our group believes that this bill would be very beneficial to many Vermonters, especially youth. Tobacco and nicotine use is a major problem in our schools, and most students can name several people who use these harmful products. We see people vaping in the bathrooms and smoking in public frequently, so it is definitely the right time for this bill.

The bill itself has many elements that we admire. We greatly appreciate the application of retailer fines toward cessation efforts and prevention tools, this will be a great investment into the health and safety of Vermonters, especially youth. The restriction on marketing that uses flavors, characters and symbols to appeal to minors is promising, as companies that create tobacco and nicotine products use many deceptive tactics to target teens, and it works. Our group also found the removal of penalties for minors' purchase, use, and possession of tobacco products, tobacco substitutes, or tobacco paraphernalia to be favorable. When minors are punished for those offenses rather than retailers, the root of the issue is not dealt with. By passing this bill, the problem can be dealt with on a much larger scale that would protect people, not punish them.

Tightening safeguards on who is allowed to distribute tobacco products will not only benefit adults and teens experiencing addiction, but will also prevent minors like us from becoming users as well, at least until our brains are developed enough to comprehend the massive risk that these products carry with them.

Best,
CVU OVX