

House Federal & State Affairs Committee
Written Testimony on HB 2563 (Proponent)
Submitted by: Dr. Todd White, Superintendent of USD 229 Blue Valley Schools and
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony **supporting HB 2563**. Our districts applaud this committee for its thoughtful consideration of legislation that will stem the tide of youth smoking and vaping that is growing exponentially in our schools.

This is a bill that would raise the tobacco purchase age to 21 and ban cigarette vending machines, as well as flavored vaping products (except menthol).

The impact of vaping in our schools and on student learning cannot be overstated. It negatively impacts the educational process and has become a major distraction for students, teachers, and administrators. Addressing student use in our schools has proven a Yeoman's effort that has demanded:

- **Education resources.** It has become a drain on education resources, as teachers and administrators spend a significant amount of time monitoring and policing vaping in school. This is time and energy that could and should be spent elsewhere;
- **Policing.** The epidemic in our schools requires increased monitoring of halls and bathrooms, as well as monitoring devices and test kits to test the contents of confiscated vaping devices. It can also lead to the involvement of local law enforcement;
- **Student Discipline.** This issue has required schools to administer stiff punishments to deter student use. School suspensions have sky-rocketed.

This bill would codify in Kansas law recent actions of the federal government to raise the purchase age of tobacco and vaping products to 21. This makes a difference in our schools, as students who have attained the legal age of purchase at 18 often become suppliers of the products to younger students. While we understand this will not totally stem the tide in our schools, we do see it as an important tool in keeping these products out of our students' hands.

Another major tool in HB 2563 is the ban of flavored vaping products, with the exception of menthol. While we prefer to see all flavors removed, we know that many of the current flavors available – such as bubblegum, fruits, and vanilla – are targeted specifically toward young people.

E-cigarettes have become the most popular tobacco product among our young people. Making them even more insidious is they deliver much higher levels of nicotine than regular cigarettes

and most young people report being unaware the products always contain nicotine. Further, these products allow nicotine to be delivered at higher concentrations without the throat irritation caused by traditional cigarettes.

Research has long shown the adolescent brain to be uniquely vulnerable to the effects of nicotine and other addictive products. The tobacco industry has capitalized on that fact, understanding those who become addicted in their youth are more likely to become life-long users of their products, thereby ensuring their bottom line for decades.

While we would prefer all flavors to be banned from vaping devices, we see this legislation as a strong step toward curbing their use by students in the school setting. **We strongly urge passage of HB 2563.**