

February 11, 2020

Chairman Barker and Committee Members:

Stallions Against Tobacco (StAT) is an organization at F.L. Schlagle High School. StAT advocates for a tobacco free generation and reducing the number of peers and teens who use tobacco and nicotine products. The use of electronic cigarette has been on a rise due to new products being promoted and flavors such menthol staying on the shelves. According to the Center Disease of Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2018, 67% of high school students and 49% of middle school students who used tobacco products in the past 30 days reported using a flavored tobacco product during that time. This led to a rise of students using e-cigarettes from 3.6 million in 2018 to 5.4 million in 2019.

Currently a problem that resides as a resident of Wyandotte County, the youth are using e-cigs and flavored products because enforcement is not being implemented. There are family owned retails such as the BP gas station across from F.L. Schlagle High School that sells nicotine and tobacco products to those who are under the age of 21. One the flavors that is highly being used is menthol/mint. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has defined menthol as *a flavor additive with minty taste and aroma that is widely consumed by users*. It has been suggested by researchers, menthol cigarettes may be harder to quit than nonmenthol cigarettes, particularly among African American smokers.

As a minority, it is commonly seen and used in this population which leads to the youth seeing individuals that look like them believe it is “okay” to use these products. Which leads to a higher number of minorities using these products. As of 2020 the FDA published the use of e-cigs menthol users was broken down by population:

85.8 percent of African American smokers

46 percent of Hispanic Smokers

39 percent of Asian smokers

28.7 percent of White smokers

Youth who smoke are more likely to smoke menthol cigarettes than older smokers. More than half of the smokers ages from 12-17.

As a youth in this generation, with Tobacco 21 being passed it creates a chance on having a tobacco free generation. There are youths younger than I am using these products, the use goes down to students who are in elementary school. The generation keeps getting younger, with them being exposed to these harmful products. I am certain the number of lung cancer cases will rise, and people will become affected at an even younger age. As mentioned before the youth are more likely to smoke menthol cigarettes than older smokers.

From experience growing up I witness the damage that tobacco and nicotine has done to my loved ones. I had an uncle who passed away due to lung cancer because of his constant use of cigarettes. I have witnessed how difficult it became to quit this habit because of the addicting

agent, nicotine. Even when he was diagnosed with lung cancer, he continued his use of cigarettes. Having witnessed this and seeing new e-cigs that have been developed, I have realized that people are not well informed on how much damage one pod can do. For example, one pod is equivalent to 20 cigarettes, this is an image that is not being put into light because if the media promoted this while promoting these products the number of users and buyers would decrease significantly.

Adding in the testimony from two of my peers who are apart of StAT. Naydel who is the treasurer mentioned, most of the adults in her family mostly men are smokers. From her experience her grandpa had been a smoker and an alcoholic. Eventually he was able to kick the habit of drinking, but he has yet been able to stop smoking because he does not see the problem or is willing to accept the effects of tobacco. Her stepfather constantly smokes daily and is aware of the damage this habit has but he cannot seem to quit. Another member Emely, who is public relations of StAT. Has an uncle who smoked cigarettes, even though he has dropped that habit. His 21-year-old daughter has picked up that habit and smokes constantly because she saw her father do it. It created an image of it is “okay” to do this because my parents did it. Emely’s biggest concern is that her younger cousins will look up to her cousin that smokes and pick up that habit as well creating a loop of tobacco use.

Even though these are some of our experiences, I know there are several more out there that we have not heard about because several topics have been censored and tailored to the tobacco industry in which they are able to promote more products.