



TESTIMONY OPPOSING HB 2563

February 12, 2020

Chairman John Barker and Members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee,

The Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (KAAP) represents over 90% of the practicing pediatricians in the state. The KAAP has the fundamental goal that all children and adolescents in Kansas have the opportunity to grow safe and strong. It is with this goal in mind that we want to share our opposition to HB 2563 based on the exemption of menthol and the fact that flavored cigars and other manufactured tobacco products would not be included in the flavor ban.

The exponential rise of e-cigarettes by children and adolescents is a public health emergency. E-cigarettes are now the most common tobacco product used by teens. In Kansas, 10.6 percent of the state's high schoolers use e-cigarettes. Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death, killing more than 4,400 Kansans yearly. It also causes roughly 28.6 percent of all cancer deaths in Kansas. E-cigarette solutions contain toxic and carcinogenic substances (anti-freeze, diethylene glycol, and nitrosamines) in addition to nicotine. Nicotine is highly addictive, and children and teens are more susceptible to the neurotoxic effects as their brains are still developing. Leaving any flavors on the market is dangerous for child health.

Flavors are appealing to children, that is why we flavor necessary medications—they taste better! We should not allow any flavoring for products as dangerous as tobacco. This fact has been exploited by the tobacco industry to entice kids into using tobacco products. Menthol is an ingredient in both mint and menthol flavored products, and it provides a cooling sensation that masks the harsh taste of nicotine, making it easier for children to get hooked. Teens that are addicted to the nicotine in e-cigarettes will take advantage of the menthol loophole if this is the only flavor being sold. Data on traditional cigarettes show that over half of youth smokers use menthol cigarettes compared to less than one-third of smokers over age 35. The CDC cites evidence that the tobacco industry has targeted racial and ethnic minorities with menthol products leading to tobacco-related health disparities, especially African American youth.

In December 2016, the U.S Surgeon General released a report concluding that e-cigarettes are unsafe for children and adolescents. Furthermore, strong and consistent evidence finds that children and adolescents who use e-cigarettes are significantly more likely to go on to use traditional cigarettes—a product that kills half its long-term users.

To prevent children, adolescents, and young adults from transitioning from e-cigarettes to traditional cigarettes and minimize the potential public health harm from e-cigarette use, there is



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a critical need for e-cigarette regulation, legislative action, and counter promotion to protect youth. Kansas decision makers must act and prohibit *all* flavored tobacco products, including menthol, cigars, and other tobacco products to protect the health of Kansas children.

Thank you for your time and attention. We welcome any questions you might have and are happy to serve as your resource on all pediatric issues. Please let us know if we can provide further information, education, or resources.

Respectfully submitted,

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References:

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