

**Testimony of**  
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**Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago**  
**&**  
**Maria Rahmandar, MD, FAAP**  
**Medical Director, Substance Use & Prevention Program (SUPP)**  
**The Potocsnak Family Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine**  
**Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago**

**Testimony Before the Legislation and Intergovernmental Relations Committee**  
**Cook County Board Room**  
**118 N. Clark Street, County Board Room**  
**Chicago, IL 60602**  
**Wednesday, May 24, 2023**  
**1:00 p.m.**

Good afternoon Chair Britton, Vice Chairwoman Degnen, and members of the Legislation and Intergovernmental Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony to you. I regret that I am unable to attend in person. My name is Susanna McColley, and I am a pediatric pulmonologist in the Division of Pulmonary and Sleep Medicine at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago, a research leader at Stanley Manne Children’s Research Institute, and a Professor of Pediatrics at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. I also serve as Editor-in-Chief of Pediatric Pulmonology, a highly cited journal focused on lung disease in children and adolescents. In over 30 years of clinical and research experience, I have committed to reducing nicotine addiction in adolescents and young adults.

My colleague, Dr. Maria Rahmandar, who is also unable to join us today, is a pediatrician specialized in adolescent medicine who serves as the founding medical director of Lurie Children’s Substance Use & Prevention Program. Dr. Rahmandar regularly treats youth addicted to nicotine, educates on risks of nicotine use and advocates to protect youth from nicotine addiction.

On behalf of Lurie Children’s Hospital, we are here today to express our full support of CHAPTER 54, ARTICLE V, TOBACCO DEALERS of the Cook County code that would prohibit a retailer from selling, giving away, bartering, exchanging or otherwise furnishing to any other person any flavored liquid nicotine products, including menthol flavored liquid nicotine, in unincorporated Cook County. This helps Cook County join other jurisdictions in fighting this attack on our youth and young adults to eliminate a major risk factor that contributes to health disparities in our communities throughout the county. A ban on flavored nicotine liquid will *reduce nicotine addiction and lung damage caused by inhalation of nicotine-containing liquid.*

*Decades* of research have proven that the adolescent brain is much more susceptible to nicotine addiction than the adult brain; this risk of addiction persists into the early 20s, well past the age of legal purchase. Adolescents who start using nicotine through inhalation of aerosolized nicotine- commonly called vaping- are also at risk of using cigarettes and small cigars, which can be less expensive. More than 7 of 10 adolescents who use nicotine both vape and use combustible (or burned) tobacco; *this behavior is driven by nicotine addiction*. Flavored nicotine products, in all forms, are attractive to adolescents; fruit and other “candy” flavors are predominantly featured. Vaping is often and erroneously portrayed as a safe alternative to cigarettes. It is also easy to conceal, with specific garments available to enable use in facilities that prohibit vaping, including schools.

It’s important to note that while health effects of “smoking” are well recognized, nicotine itself has adverse effects on the cardiovascular system, contributing to heart disease, stroke and other disorders. Vaping is associated with mental health disorders and lung disease. Vaping liquid, even without nicotine, contains volatile compounds and heavy metals. Alarming, a clinical syndrome called EVALI (E-cigarette or Vaping Product Associated Lung Injury), has been primarily reported in adolescents.

Adolescent nicotine addiction is not an adolescent problem alone; most adults who use nicotine products started using them as teenagers. Nicotine use in pregnancy can damage the lungs and brain, and the chemicals in vaping liquids may cause additional harm. Exposure to vaping or smoking in the home is associated with respiratory illness, and children have died after accidentally drinking nicotine-containing vaping liquid.

Health disparities associated with menthol-flavored nicotine products have been well documented in recent years. With *worsening* gaps in life expectancy among minoritized communities, it is more important than ever to take every measure possible to improve health equity. This amendment is one step in the right direction, and we implore you to take it.

Thank you for your consideration.

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