

Timothy Casey (Secretary to the Board)

From: Reid Nuttall <coolcloudsllc@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 27, 2023 7:41 AM
To: CookCounty Board (Secretary to the Board)
Subject: Testimony in opposition 23-2311 4/27/23

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Honorable Members of the Cook County Board of Directors,

I am Reid Nuttall, the owner and operator of Cool Clouds Vapor Shop. Since opening my store in 2014, I have assisted over 10,000 people in transitioning away from deadly combustible cigarettes. I also serve as the Vice President of the Smoke-Free Alternatives Coalition of Illinois. Our organization's mission is to ensure quality and affordable vapor products are available for current and former cigarette smokers in Illinois. Our members are industry-leading retailers, manufacturers and distributors of nicotine vapor products and have consistently advocated for reasonable regulation of vapor products.

Today, I stand in opposition to Bill 23-2311, which proposes to ban the sale of flavored vapor products in our county. While I respect the intention behind this bill—to protect the health and well-being of our young people—I am deeply concerned that its implementation will not achieve these objectives and may also generate numerous unintended consequences.

Firstly, this bill is predicated on the notion that banning flavored vapes will significantly decrease teen usage. While we all share concerns about teen vaping, the data invoked to validate this legislation lacks crucial context and is misleading in its current presentation. It's crucial that our legislative decisions are informed by data that is not only accurate but also presented in its full context to provide a realistic picture of the situation.

Second, this bill seems to undermine the principle of harm reduction, a fundamental component of modern public health policy. For many adults battling nicotine addiction, flavored vapor products offer a less harmful

alternative to traditional cigarettes. By restricting access to these products, we risk pushing these individuals back towards traditional, more harmful methods of nicotine consumption or towards unregulated black markets.

Additionally, this bill would create a direct conflict with existing state laws. The proposed signage requirements, stating that the sale of tobacco products to anyone under the age of 18 is illegal, directly contradict the state law which mandates 21 as the legal age for purchasing such products. This inconsistency creates confusion and undermines the credibility of our legal institutions.

In 2016, I cautioned against a tax that would incentivize high-nicotine products. Now, in 2023, we grapple with the repercussions of that decision. We find ourselves contemplating adding even more restrictions to the very products that were created as a result of our past legislation. We must learn from our past and not repeat these mistakes.

This bill, if passed, will hand over a monopoly on vapor products to big tobacco, leaving our county to rely on RJ Reynolds to ensure that harm-reducing vapor products are designed in a manner that cigarette smokers find acceptable.

A century ago, legislators sat in a room similar to this one, deciding the fate of cannabis in our state. The concerns we address today eerily echo those from that time. We chose prohibition then and ended up sending a quarter of our minority male population to prison for consuming a substance that should have been legally available for adult consumption.

I urge this Board to delay action today to allow for a thorough understanding of this issue to be explored by its members. The lives of county residents hang in the balance, and hastily pushing through flawed legislation does not reflect good governance.

In closing, I implore you to reconsider the implications of Bill 23-2311. We need evidence-based solutions to address the issue of teen vaping, rather than blanket bans that may cause more harm than good. Let us work together to create a policy that genuinely protects our youth, respects adult rights, and upholds the integrity of our laws.

I extend my decade of experience in helping craft reasonable regulations on vapor products to any member of this board. We are allies in the fight to reduce teen nicotine consumption. However, persuading the parents of these same teens to exclude harm-reduction strategies isn't just an oversight—it's an action that could precipitate the preventable loss of life within the very citizenry this board is committed to serving.

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