

KENAI LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION OFFICE

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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

NAME:

Kate Vek

REPRESENTING:

myself

BILL # or SUBJECT:

89

COMMITTEE:

(5) Labor + Commerce

DATE:

March 24, 2023

NOTE: This testimony is considered part of the official record and will be posted online with the hearing documents

To: Senators

I'm Kate Vek from Soldotna, Alaska.

My story is, unfortunately, too common. I have a kid that I'm super proud of + love dearly who got himself addicted to vapes in the 9th grade. He came home smelling like cotton candy + I didn't recognize it as tobacco because I could only associate ash tray smells with nicotine. By the time I figured out he was using vapes, he was already addicted.

I went through 1 year of hell trying to get my kid off of nicotine. There was very little support, as many people here were also vaping + had no idea about the dangers of e-cigarettes. Our pediatrician + counselor both told us the same thing: the person who was addicted had to decide to quit. I, as a parent, couldn't do it for him.

Why was my kid dealing with this at age 14? He wasn't even supposed to have his

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hands on ecigarettes. I learned vapes were cheap + easy for teens to attain (both online + in person). Many people didn't know vapes were unhealthy + addictive (some thought they were actually good for you). I learned vapes came in enticing sweet flavors that were paired with large amounts of highly addictive nicotine. I learned that "Big Tobacco" set their target on 14-year-olds because that is the prime starting age of a lifelong customer.

Other things I learned: Kids aged 17-21 (nationwide) have been coming down with ecoli, a vape-related lung disease that looks a lot like covid. I learned about Daniel, a 17-year-old Michigan kid who had a lung transplant from vaping ecigarettes. I learned about several kids who died because their lungs just gave out.

My story has a happy ending. My kid was caught vaping in school + given a court

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date + suspension. We had to work through this very serious issue as a family, and I am happy to report that my son is officially done with the whole vaping experience.

However the crisis continues... I was able to help one kid, but I can't help out the numerous other children who find themselves addicted to cigarettes. We need this Bill SB 89, to help keep vaping products out of the hands of our children. Please help. Our kids are being squashed by the pro-tobacco message. Vote yes on SB 89.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Kate Vek

Soldotna, Alaska