

**MARYLAND COMMITTEE HEARING ON H.B. 134
TESTIMONY FOR THE RECORD ON BEHALF OF PAVe**

FEBRUARY 10, 2021

Ms. Chairman, Mr. Vice-Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on this important and urgent topic and to express my support for a flavored tobacco ban in Maryland. My name is Linda Willard, and I am a resident of Chevy Chase Village, Maryland. I am the mother of two teenage boys and a pre-teen girl, so the role of flavors in the alarming numbers of youth who are vaping deeply concerns me.

I also am the Maryland representative of a national grassroots organization, Parents Against Vaping and E-Cigarettes, or PAVe. PAVe was started in 2018 by three concerned moms in response to the youth vaping epidemic and is now in more than a dozen states with its chapters, called “pods” all run by volunteer parent advocates like me.

There are three aspects of the use of flavors in tobacco that are particularly harmful to young people.

- 1) Flavors hook kids
- 2) Flavors mask tobacco-related risks
- 3) Flavors do NOT help adults quit smoking

There are currently 15,500 vape or e-cigarettes flavors on the market. Candy-sweet flavors with kid-friendly names like Candy Apple, Unicorn Poop, or Bubblegum mask the harshness of the tobacco flavor. 8 out of 10 teens report that they began vaping because of the flavors. Flavors also give young people a false sense of safety. More than 65 percent of kids who vape report they had no idea these devices contain nicotine.

In fact, one JUUL pod is equivalent to 20 cigarettes, multiples more than are contained in traditional cigarettes. Additionally, JUUL’s patented nicotine technology, now used by its many copycats, delivers these huge amounts of nicotine more efficiently to the brain, making it even more highly addictive, particularly to developing brains that are indelibly rewired for further addictions.

You will likely hear arguments that adults need flavors to successfully quit smoking conventional cigarettes. However, that is simply not supported by the research. While adults may prefer flavors, they are more likely to quit smoking cigarettes without flavors, and the evidence that e-cigarettes help adults quit smoking conventional cigarettes is so far unproven. Early research even suggests they lead to dual usage.

The evidence is clear. The extraordinarily high levels of nicotine get kids addicted, flavors attract and keep kids addicted to tobacco, and adults don’t need flavored e- cigarettes to quit smoking. I urge you to end the sale of flavored tobacco, including mint and menthol, with no exceptions.

