

3/2/26

I, Sheila Thompson, am testifying in my capacity as a citizen.

Sheila Thompson spoke to us in support of Senate Bill 798 and agreed to have her name and words shared here today. She has Medicaid and Medicare. In 2011, she tried to stop smoking cigarettes by using patches and gum. She said the medications were expensive and weren't working well for her at that time, so she tried vaping and instantly stopped smoking. She vaped consistently until the fall of 2024 when she stopped completely with the help of nicotine patch, Nicotrol inhalers, and counseling. The inhalers weren't covered by her insurance so she obtained them with the help of Pfizer Patient Assistance Program and samples purchased by the Nicotine Health Clinic from Kea Health. The patches were not covered either so she has relied on clinic samples and the Quitline to provide patches.

“I went from regular cigarettes to electronic cigarettes in 2011 to try to stop smoking. I stopped smoking regular cigarettes entirely. Before trying the electronic cigarettes, I had tried the gum and patch. I didn't do it consistently and I was removing the patches to smoke. I'm sure those meds were good, I just don't do well with new medicines sometimes. Gum and lozenges helped my grandson a lot. But when I was introduced to e-cigarettes, I didn't know the harm I was doing to myself until Dr. Deepak showed me that the vapes were hurting my body.

It was very hard to fight nicotine dependence along with insurance not covering medication because everything was so expensive out of pocket. The patches alone were very expensive. Same with the lozenges and gum. You have to put out so much money for the medications try to stop smoking and then you don't have any money left to spend when you need more medicine, so you're back to square one. When I found out that Nicotrol was going away (discontinued by Pfizer), I was really disappointed and a little shaky. Unrestricted access to Nicotrol was fantastic. Patches and Nicotrol and counseling are what really did it.”