

My Son's Vaping Nightmare

I am a concerned mother and a parent volunteer with Parents Against Vaping and I thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

While the spirit of **SB 273** is a good one, given that it prohibits the sale of flavored sealed vape products and seeks to regulate vape shops to ensure that flavored products are kept out of the hands of our children, it does not go far enough. It leaves flavored open container products on the market and in so doing keeps the door open for kids to have access to these flavored products therefore I can only support this bill if it is addended to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol.

Let me share with you my son's vaping nightmare...

A year ago my son, an honor roll student and a dual sport varsity athlete tried vaping flavored nicotine for the first time. He said it tasted great, cherry was his favorites. He liked the flavors not just for the taste but also because he could easily pass it off as candy.

The candy odor was a sign, like so many others. The flash drives, that were vape devices. The stripped USB cords, the empty pods, cartridges, and e-juice containers. Even as a self-proclaimed "Helicopter Mom" I did not see what was happening. It was not until months later, at which point my son had now been vaping for 3 months, every day, 4 to 5 times a day.

I could not believe Jacob had gotten caught up in this vaping epidemic. How did this happen when he knew the dangers? How did this happen when the age limit was now over 21? But it did and now he could not stop, he craved it every day all day.

His mood swings, panic attacks, failing grades, troubles in school, lack of motivation, depression, lies, desperation...it was all there.

There are events that neither Jacob nor I will soon forget...

Like the day he called me from a bathroom at school having a panic attack because he knew if he left the stall, he would vape with the others who vape every day all day.

Then there was the night I listened to my son crying uncontrollably and asking me through gut wrenching sobs “Mom, why is this happening to me? Why can’t I stop?”

This healthy strong high school boy with a 4.13 GPA and amazing athletic abilities was no longer the boy I knew as my son. Vaping was now ruling his life. The addiction took over and it had complete control of him.

Sadly, the physical effects of vaping were just as great. Jacob, a starter player and one who usually played the entire game no longer could because he could not breathe. No parent should have to watch their child gasp for breath like Jacob did on a field THAT he once dominated.

Jacob is working hard to overcome his addiction but the craving are strong and he struggles. Sadly, just a couple of weeks ago I found several empty menthol cartridges, his “New” favorite flavor. Yes, menthol is a flavor, and it is in fact one of the most popular flavors that is attracting our children.

I do not want any other child to have to deal with the addiction my son, Jacob is still dealing with. People need to understand the severe negative effects of vaping, both mentally and physically.

These flavors draw kids into vaping, the extremely high levels of nicotine addicts them and keeps them coming back for more. This epidemic is not going away if our kids are able to buy flavored nicotine products and that is exactly what is happening. The age restriction of 21 is not always enforced. The only way to end this is to remove ALL flavors. We can do this in Maryland NOW with the passage of SB 177 which is a total flavor ban on all flavored tobacco products and e-cigs.

It’s time to protect our children from this deadly habit.