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New Hampshire Senate Votes to End Underage Vaping
Members of the New Hampshire Youth Network Applaud State Legislators

Concord, New Hampshire, April 21, 2010 - Earlier today, the New Hampshire Senate voted to pass HB1541, which bans the sale of electronic cigarettes to minors. Members of the New Hampshire Youth Network watched from the gallery in Concord, as their first advocacy campaign ended with a legislative victory.

The youth first sounded the alarm about this product last summer at a barbecue hosted by Breathe New Hampshire. “We had never heard of this product before our youth network members told us about it,” said Marie Mulroy, Tobacco Program Manager at Breathe New Hampshire. “We looked into it a bit and were astounded by this blatant marketing of a new nicotine delivery device to our youth.” The newly launched statewide youth network voted to take this issue on as their first legislative campaign. “Since that time, they have worked very hard to educate the public and our legislators about electronic cigarettes,” said Mulroy. “They have testified at both the House and the Senate. They have drafted letters; created signs; posted information to YouTube; made phone calls, and more,” she said.

The high tech cigarettes look exactly like traditional cigarettes; however, they are battery operated, made of plastic, and use liquid nicotine contained in refillable cartridges. The unit heats up and produces a vapor that the user inhales, just like the smoke from a traditional cigarette. Users are said to be “vaping” rather than smoking. There is no tell tale odor or smoke, so users can easily remain undetected in public restrooms, without setting off smoke detectors or sprinkler systems. Because this product does not use tobacco, it has been completely unregulated since it first began showing up on the market last summer. This means that until now, E-cigarettes could be bought and used by anyone, including children, at any time. Representatives from Breathe New Hampshire, as well as from its New Hampshire Youth Network, have been working to educate the public about these products. They spearheaded the effort to stop the sale of electronic cigarettes to youth. Representative Rich DiPentima of Portsmouth is the prime sponsor of HB1541, which amends current NH youth tobacco access laws to extend to and include the liquid nicotine in the electronic smoking device cartridges.
“My friend bought an electronic cigarette because she thought it would help her quit smoking,” said Georgia Doing, a student at High Mowing School in Wilton. “She has been smoking more than ever. Despite the optimistic benefits that e-cigarettes advertise, the truth is they create or fuel an addiction to nicotine.”

Another student, Mara Zrzavy of Peterborough told legislators that she “can honestly say that teens are influenced by our peers and by advertising, and with the cool electronic format and the strategic placing of ads in malls and the Internet (Facebook), teens will want this exciting new product that comes in candy-like flavors and is marketed by people we aspire to be.”

Others in support of the bill include the NH Attorney General’s Office, the NH Cigar Association, and the Electronic Cigarette Association. “This bill makes good sense,” said Daniel Fortin, Breathe New Hampshire’s President and CEO. “We know that nicotine is a highly addictive substance and this is just one more way to attract and addict our youth. We need to do all that we can to keep electronic cigarettes out of their hands.”

“The public is outraged by this product,” said Marie Mulroy, Legislative Liaison for Breathe New Hampshire. “That is once they know about it. The truth is that people just don’t know about this product or they assume the product is already subject to regulation. Once they know the facts, they are angry. We are grateful the NH legislature is doing its part by passing this important legislation.”

About Breathe New Hampshire

Since 1916, Breathe New Hampshire has been dedicated to eliminating lung disease through providing educational programs, public health advocacy, and the support of scientific research that help prevent, eliminate, and treat lung disease. To learn more about Breathe New Hampshire or to make a donation, visit www.breathenh.org.

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