

NYS Senate Hearing on Vaping and e-cigarettes
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Eric Byrne, EdD
Superintendent of Schools, Rye City School District

Good afternoon, and thank you very much for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. My name is Eric Byrne and I am the Superintendent of Schools of the Rye City School District in Rye, NY. I am also the parent of a 20-year-old whose adolescent years coincided exactly with the massive growth of the e-cigarette and vaping industry.

Data and Information

In 2018, a US Surgeon General's Advisory on E-cigarette Use Among Youth noted that e-cigarette usage among 12th grade students nearly doubled from 11% to 21% from 2017 to 2018. It was the single biggest year-over-year increase of usage of any substance in the history of Monitoring the Future Data collection, which began in 1975. Specific to my school district's county, Westchester County data shows that the use of e-cigarettes among 12th grade students currently stands at 31%, which exceeds the national average, and statewide, that number is at 37%. To provide a sense of the magnitude of those numbers: in 2019, 5 million youth reported using e-cigarettes, up from 3 million in 2017.

According to Dr. Nora Volkow, the Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse:

- Drugs of addiction change the brains of those who use them - and this is especially true for adolescent brains that are still developing
- Youth who use e-cigarettes are 6-7 times more likely to move on to combustible cigarettes as compared to peers who didn't use e-cigarettes

In 2018, Dr. Robert DuPont *et al* describe the Data from the National Survey of Drug Use and Health and Monitoring the Future Survey (which includes thousands of respondents) among youth aged 12-17 who use nicotine versus their peers who do not. These youth are :

- 4 times more likely to drink alcohol
- 6 times more likely to binge drink
- 7 times more likely to use marijuana
- 8 times more likely to use other illicit drugs

The National Center of Addiction and Substance Abuse reports that addiction is a pediatric-onset disease. 90% of adults with substance use disorders began smoking, drinking, and using drugs prior to age 18. As a parent, an educator, and a policy-maker in a nation that is in the throes of an epidemic of addiction, policies around e-cigarettes and vaping have an impact that is far-reaching.

Four out of five youths say flavors are what first attracted them to e-cigarettes. Data from the 2016-2017 PATH Study (PATH stands for Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health) showed that 96.17% of 12-17 year olds who initiated e-cigarette use did so with a flavored product. Additionally, 97% of current youth e-cigarette users report using a flavored e-liquid in the last month. 63.9% of high school aged e-cigarette users reported using mint or menthol which are almost as popular as fruit flavors.

In 2016, advertising of e-cigarettes and e-cigarette related products was seen by 78.25% of middle school students in the United States as reported by the National Youth Tobacco Survey of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This amounts to approximately 20.5 million children.

The positive messages that we send to children in schools through health classes, assemblies, presentations, don't stand a chance against such pervasive sales and marketing campaigns. Demonstrably effective marketing, ease of access, and the appeal of vaping and e-cigarette usage have created a rapidly growing crisis in our young people. The explosive growth of e-cigarette usage among young people is frightening. Adults need to step up, take responsibility, and take strong measures to protect children from those who have created and support this epidemic.

Impact on Schools

Vaping and e-cigarette use in school buildings and on school campuses and at school events, has created a challenge of epic proportions. Teachers and school administrators are challenged to identify and address vaping and e-cigarette usage throughout the school day and after school at school-sponsored events in both hidden and open settings. Vaping technology is so sophisticated that the small size of devices are easily hidden in a student's hand -- out of sight and nearly invisible. The power necessary to use these devices comes directly from a USB port in a laptop computer - a tool that is commonplace in schools today. To the untrained eye, many e-cigarettes look identical to a common USB thumb drive that is used for computer document storage. The fact that the vapor disintegrates rapidly makes detection incredibly difficult. A student might inhale while a teacher's back is turned, and all evidence would be gone 10 seconds later.

The dramatic increase of e-cigarette usage in schools has created and continues to increase levels of:

- Student distraction from school work and healthy socialization
- Fear and discomfort among non-users due to vaping in restrooms and classrooms
- Negative peer pressure and the desire to live up to the 'cool' factor that comes with e-cigarette usage
- Loss of school instructional time due to discipline for vaping in school
 - Increase of suspensions due to vaping and e-cigarette usage in school

- To borrow words from a youth leader, “Vaping is all too commonplace in school bathrooms, libraries, and even classrooms. Anti-drug campaigns can only do so much on their own. As youth leaders, we are doing our part by getting the message out to our peers. Flavored vape pods need to be banned. It is vital to end e-cig use by teens. We need policy makers to take responsibility for their part and help us make that change a reality.”

In addition, schools are faced with challenges that are both operational and fiscal:

- Difficulty in monitoring
 - Poor effectiveness and high cost of detection devices available
 - Small vaping devices are easy to hide and keep out of sight
- Shifting resources from instructional and co-curricular budgets to monitoring vaping and enforce infractions