



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Wednesday, February 1, 2023**

**HB 6488, An Act Concerning Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic
Nicotine Delivery Systems And Vapor Products**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 6488, An Act Concerning Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems And Vapor Products**. CHA supports the flavoring ban contained in HB 6488, but respectfully asks the Committee to amend the bill. Specifically, we ask that menthol flavoring be added to the list of flavored tobacco, nicotine delivery systems, and vapor products prohibited for sale in the state.

Connecticut hospitals continue to meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and are now facing new challenges of treating sicker patients than they saw before the pandemic, with a dedicated but smaller workforce who are exemplary but exhausted. They are also experiencing significant financial hardships brought on by record inflation. Through it all, hospitals have been steadfast, providing high-quality care for everyone who walks through their doors, regardless of ability to pay.

CHA supports strong tobacco control measures, whether through municipal ordinances, workplace policies, or state and federal laws. On a daily basis, caregivers in Connecticut hospitals see firsthand the impact of tobacco-related disease and illness and, because of this, we wholeheartedly endorse common sense public policy initiatives, such as HB 6488.

We know that the best way to reduce health-associated harm caused by smoking is to abstain from smoking altogether or, at a minimum, delay the start of smoking. We also know that added flavoring in tobacco, vapor, and nicotine products entices more users and makes an otherwise objectionable taste more palatable and enjoyable¹. Flavored tobacco, vapor, and nicotine products can appeal to youths and young adults, influencing the initiation and establishment of tobacco use patterns².

¹ U.S. Food and Drug Administration. *Menthol and Other Flavors in Tobacco Products* (<https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/products-ingredients-components/menthol-and-other-flavors-tobacco-products#reference>) accessed 1-30-23.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2014–2018; *Weekly* / October 4, 2019 / 68(39);839–844 (<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6839a2.htm>) accessed 1-30-23.

We believe banning all flavoring in all tobacco products is the next logical step in the state's tobacco control initiatives, following the passage of T-21 and the reestablishment and funding of the state's Tobacco Trust Fund. We look forward to working with you to strengthen the legislation and ensure the passage of this important public health policy initiative.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.