



RHODE ISLAND KIDS COUNT
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**Testimony Re: Senate Bill No. 543: An Act Relating to Taxation –
Cigarette and Other Tobacco Products Tax
Senate Finance Committee
April 1, 2025
Michaela Carroll, Policy Analyst**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its opposition to Senate Bill 543. This bill exempts vape shops from prohibitions on the sale of flavored electronic cigarettes.

While there has been a decline in current e-cigarette use among US high school students, from 10% in 2023 to 7.8% in 2024, flavored electronic nicotine-delivery systems (ENDS) remain the most popular product for youth use. Among Rhode Island youth who currently use e-cigarettes (also known as vapes or ENDS), 95% use flavored products.

Nearly 2,000 Rhode Islanders' deaths every year are attributable to smoking and tobacco use and preventing young people from beginning to smoke protects their developing adolescent brains from nicotine's harmful effects on attention, learning, mood, and impulse control. E-cigarettes are often proposed as a way to help people quit smoking, but flavored e-cigarettes are the way that many young people *begin* smoking. There is no e-cigarette currently approved by the FDA to help people quit smoking. The sale of flavored e-cigarettes has been banned since then Governor Gina Raimondo's executive order in 2019, which was codified into law and took effect January 1st, 2025. Exempting vape shops threatens to erode the progress made in protecting our youth from the harms of e-cigarette use.

Thank you for the leadership that the General Assembly has shown on this issue in the past. We urge you to vote against Senate Bill 543 and uphold the ban on flavored e-cigarettes statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.