



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:
H.B. NO. 756, H.D. 2, RELATING TO HEALTH.

BEFORE THE:
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

DATE: Friday, February 21, 2025 **TIME:** 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 308

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Chelsea Okamoto, Deputy Attorney General

Chair Yamashita and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) supports this bill and offers the following comments.

This bill prohibits retailers from selling flavored nicotine products and nicotine product flavor enhancers, as well as mislabeling e-liquid products as nicotine-free. It also establishes fines of up to \$1,000 for each offense, with collected fines deposited into the general fund. Additionally, the bill authorizes the Department of Health to appoint, commission, or contract for services of inspectors and establishes program specialist positions and a hearing officer position.

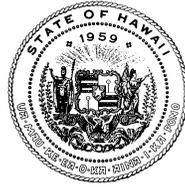
Hawaii's youth has been disproportionately affected by the nationwide vaping epidemic. The Department supports the Department of Health's administrative enforcement of the ban on the sale and distribution of flavored nicotine products and its efforts to prevent Hawaii's youth from being targeted by and addicted to these products.

To strengthen the bill, the Department recommends the following amendments:

1. Add a section to repeal section 328J-11.5, HRS, which preempts county ordinances regulating tobacco sales, to allow for a more comprehensive approach to addressing the proliferation of flavored tobacco products.
2. Amend section 4 of the bill (page 13, line 19, to page 14, line 6) to insert an appropriation amount of \$1,000,000 (as proposed in H.B. No. 1116 (2025) at page 16, lines 1-6) to carry out the purposes of this bill.

3. Reinsert the original number of positions being established (i.e., two full-time equivalent (2.0 FTE) program specialist positions and one full-time equivalent (1.0 FTE) hearing officer position) in section 3 (page 13, lines 13 to 18) and section 4 (page 13, line 19, to page 14, line 6).
4. Restore the original effective date of January 1, 2026, in place of the current defective date (while leaving the effective date of July 1, 2025, for section 4 of the bill).

We respectfully ask the Committee to pass this bill with our recommended revisions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P.O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 756, H.D. 2
RELATING TO HEALTH**

REPRESENTATIVE KYLE T. YAMASHITA, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Hearing Date: February 21, 2025

Room Number: Conference Room 308
and Videoconference

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The fiscal impact of a ban on flavored nicotine products in Hawaii would
2 result in modest reductions in Hawaii's tax revenues while at the same time leading to
3 reductions in chronic diseases and health care spending, including Medicaid spending in the
4 state.

5 **Department Position:** The Department of Health (DOH) supports House Bill 756, House Draft 2
6 (H.B. 756, H.D. 2) as a critical public health measure to protect the next generation in Hawaii
7 from lifelong tobacco use.

8 **Department Testimony:** H.B. 756, H.D. 2 proposes to prohibit the sale of flavored nicotine
9 products (including menthol) and nicotine product flavor enhancers, prohibits the mislabeling
10 as nicotine-free any e-liquid products containing nicotine, allocates an unspecified amount of
11 funding to the DOH for the purposes of establishing inspectors and hearings officer positions,
12 and imparts authority to the DOH to adopt and amend interim administrative rules and
13 contract a third party for services related to enforcement, inspections, or administration of this
14 law.

15 Over the past decade, the vaping crisis in Hawaii has evolved and expanded to both
16 younger and older age groups. The latest estimates show that current use of e-cigarettes

1 among high school youth is at 13.2% which is down slightly from 14.8% in 2021, however,
2 middle school e-cigarette use increased by 35%, to 10.3% in 2023 from 6.7% in 2021.^{1,2}
3 Moreover, there was a rise in middle school e-cigarette use for every other e-cigarette indicator
4 including experimentation or ever use (12.8% to 16.9%), daily use (1.2% to 2.0%), and frequent
5 use (1.8% to 2.7%).^{3,4,5}

6 Overall adult vaping has also risen from 7.2% in 2021 to 8.8% in 2022,⁶ and most
7 concerning is the prevalence among young adults. The latest estimates are that 27.4% of
8 people ages 18-24 years old and 16.8% of 25-34 years old report current e-cigarette use.⁷ The
9 trends indicate that youth who were exposed to e-cigarettes in high school and middle school
10 in 2018, when vaping was declared a national epidemic,⁸ are now the young adults who report
11 current vaping.

12 Anecdotally, educators in elementary schools in Hawaii are reporting children as young
13 as second grade being caught possessing e-cigarettes. The changing nature of the vaping crisis,
14 shifting to younger ages, and the rise in use among those in middle school and young adults
15 raises concerns about the failure of current efforts to curb this public health issue among future
16 generations.

17 The absence of protective policies to act as a preventive buffer between the promotion
18 of enticing electronic smoking devices, also known as e-cigarettes, and youth, contributed to

¹ *Hawai'i IBIS - Query Result—Hawai'i Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Data—Electronic vapor product—Current use, High Schools, County-level.* (n.d.). Retrieved January 29, 2025, from https://hhdw.org/report/query/result/yrbs/VaporCurr/VaporCurr_HS_CNTY.html

² *Hawai'i IBIS - Query Result—Hawai'i Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Data—Electronic vapor product—Current use, Middle Schools, County-level.* (n.d.). Retrieved January 29, 2025, from https://hhdw.org/report/query/result/yrbs/VaporCurr/VaporCurr_MS_CNTY.html

³ *Hawai'i IBIS - Query Result—Hawai'i Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Data—Electronic vapor product—Ever use, Middle Schools, County-level.* (n.d.). Retrieved January 27, 2025, from https://hhdw.org/report/query/result/yrbs/VaporEver/VaporEver_MS_CNTY.html

⁴ *Hawai'i IBIS - Query Result—Hawai'i Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Data—Electronic vapor product—Frequent use, Middle Schools, County-level.* (n.d.). Retrieved January 27, 2025, from https://hhdw.org/report/query/result/yrbs/VaporFreq/VaporFreq_MS_CNTY.html

⁵ *Hawai'i IBIS - Query Result—Hawai'i Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Data—Electronic vapor product—Daily use, Middle Schools, County-level.* (n.d.). Retrieved January 27, 2025, from https://hhdw.org/report/query/result/yrbs/VaporDaily/VaporDaily_MS_CNTY.html

⁶ *Hawai'i IBIS - Query Result—Hawaii's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Data—E-cigarettes—Current use.* (n.d.). Retrieved January 29, 2025, from <https://hhdw.org/report/query/result/brfss/SmokeECigsCurr/SmokeECigsCurrCrude11.html>

⁷ *Hawai'i IBIS - Query Result—Hawaii's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Data—E-cigarettes—Current use.* (n.d.). Retrieved January 29, 2025, from <https://hhdw.org/report/query/result/brfss/SmokeECigsCurr/SmokeECigsCurrCrude11.html>

⁸ Stein, R. (2018, December 18). Surgeon General Warns Youth Vaping Is Now An "Epidemic." *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/12/18/677755266/surgeon-general-warns-youth-vaping-is-now-an-epidemic>

1 the ongoing marketing and unrestricted access to nicotine. Nationally, sales data showed that
2 high dose nicotine products with 5% nicotine or higher increased from 5% of total sales in 2017
3 to 81% in 2022.⁹ According to data from the 2024 National Youth Tobacco Survey, e-cigarettes
4 remain the most commonly used tobacco product by U.S. youth at 5.9%, followed by nicotine
5 pouches at 1.8%. More than 8 out of 10 youth e-cigarette and nicotine pouch users reported
6 using flavored products at 88% and 86% respectively.¹⁰ The most used e-cigarette flavors were
7 fruit, followed by candy, desserts, or other sweets, mint, and menthol.¹¹ For youth nicotine
8 pouch users, the most used flavor was mint followed by fruit.¹²

9 Youth are especially vulnerable to the harm and addictiveness of nicotine.¹³ Nicotine
10 impacts the parts of the adolescent brain responsible for memory, learning, and attention and
11 can also worsen anxiety, irritability, and impulsivity.¹⁴

12 The changing nature of the vaping crisis, shifting to younger ages with notable rise in
13 use among middle schoolers and elevated prevalence in young adults continues to raise
14 concerns about the need for protective measures. The DOH supports H.B. 756, H.D. 2 as a
15 critical public health measure to safeguard the health of our children and ensure a healthier
16 future for all residents of Hawaii.

17 **Offered Amendments:** None

18 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

⁹ Ali, FRM, et al., "Trends in US E-cigarette Sales and Prices by Nicotine Strength, Overall and by Product and Flavor Type, 2017-2022," *Nicotine & Tobacco Research* 25(5):1052-1056, 2023.

¹⁰ Center for Tobacco Products. (2025). Results from the Annual National Youth Tobacco Survey. FDA. <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey>

¹¹ Center for Tobacco Products. (2025). Results from the Annual National Youth Tobacco Survey. FDA. <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey>

¹² Center for Tobacco Products. (2025). Results from the Annual National Youth Tobacco Survey. FDA. <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey>

¹³ *The Effects of Nicotine on The Adolescent Brain—Vaping Side Effects. Get the Facts Here.* - Tobacco Free CA. (n.d.). Retrieved January 28, 2021, from <https://tobaccofreeca.com/e-cigarettes/the-effects-of-nicotine-on-the-adolescent-brain/>

¹⁴ *The Effects of Nicotine on The Adolescent Brain—Vaping Side Effects. Get the Facts Here.* - Tobacco Free CA. (n.d.). Retrieved January 28, 2021, from <https://tobaccofreeca.com/e-cigarettes/the-effects-of-nicotine-on-the-adolescent-brain/>

Jennifer Kagiwada
Council Member District 2 South Hilo



Office: (808) 961-8272
jennifer.kagiwada@hawaiicounty.gov

HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL - DISTRICT 2

25 Aupuni Street • Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

DATE: February 20, 2025
TO: House Committee on Finance
FROM: Jennifer Kagiwada, Council Member
Council District 2
SUBJECT: HB 756 HD2

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Committee Members,

I am testifying in support of HB 756, HD2 which prohibits the sale of flavored nicotine products and the mislabeling of e-liquids as nicotine free, establishes penalties for violations, authorizes the Department of Health to appoint, commission, or contract for services of inspectors and establishes two full-time equivalent program specialist positions and one full-time equivalent hearing officer position.

Reauthorizing Counties to regulate the sale of tobacco products allows for even more opportunities for innovative policies at the local level. County legislators are not being lobbied by tobacco industry representatives, which means they are in a position to more easily pass laws that put public health for our residents first. Cutting back on tobacco sales and use can improve public health and reduce health care costs associated with tobacco related illnesses, a benefit to us all.

Counties have a strong track record of passing successful tobacco policies, with less interference from big tobacco companies. Hawai'i County, in particular, has a good history of helping to pass public health policies such as Tobacco 21 and smoke-free air laws.

The City and County of Honolulu and Hawai'i County recently passed legislation ending the sale of flavored tobacco and were met with an overwhelming amount of public support. However, these laws cannot be enacted until the county authority is restored.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.

Mahalo,

Jenn Kagiwada



HAWAII YOUTH SERVICES NETWORK

677 Ala Moana Blvd., Suite 904

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Phone: (808) 489-9549

Web site: <http://www.hysn.org> E-mail: info@hysn.org

Vonnell Ramos, President
Cyd Hoffeld, Vice President
Sione Ford Naeata, Treasurer
Greg Tjapkes, Secretary

Judith F. Clark, Executive
Director

Network Membership

Access to Independence
Big Brothers Big Sisters Hawaii
Bobby Benson Center
Child and Family Service
Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawaii
Domestic Violence Action Center
EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.
Friends of the Children's Justice
Center of Maui
Get Ready Hawaii
Hale Kipa, Inc.
Hale 'Opio Kaua'i, Inc.
Hawaii Children's Action
Network
Hawaii Health & Harm
Reduction Center
Hawaii Island Community'
Health Center
Ho'ola Na Pua
Ho'okele Coalition of Kaua'i
Ka Hale Pomaika'i
Kokua Kalihi Valley
Kaua'i Planning and Action
Alliance
Lines for Life Youth Line
Maui Youth and Family Services
Na Pu'uwai Molokai Native
Hawaiian Health Care
Systems
P.A.R.E.N.T.S., Inc.
Parents and Children Together
PHOCUSED
Piha Wellness and Healing
Planned Parenthood of the
Great Northwest, Hawaii
Alaska, Kentucky, Indiana
Residential Youth Services
& Empowerment (RYSE)
Salvation Army Family
Intervention Services
Sex Abuse Treatment Center
Susannah Wesley Community
Center
The Catalyst Group

February 19, 2025

To: Representative Kyle Yamashita, Chair
And members of the Committee on Finance

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 756 HD2 RELATING TO
HEALTH

Hawaii Youth Services Network (HYSN), a statewide coalition of youth-serving organizations, supports HB 756 HD2 Relating to Health.

Banning the sale of flavored tobacco products was a top priority recommendation by the youth and young adults who attended the Hawaii Children and Youth Summit.

Hawaii has a high rate of youth vaping and manufacturers target youth in their marketing efforts. Banning the sale of flavored tobacco products will reduce youth tobacco usage and prevent the serious health problems that result from tobacco use.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Judith F. Clark, MPH
Executive Director



February 19, 2025

To: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Re: SUPPORT OF HB 756 HD2

Hrg: Friday, February 21, 2025 at 2:00PM

The Hawai'i Public Health Association (HPHA) is a group of over 450 community members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health.

The Hawaii Public Health Association supports HB756 HD2. This measure is important because in our state, 13.2% of high school students and 10.3% of middle school students still report "current use" of e-cigarettes. With 8 in 10 kids starting with a flavored tobacco product, we need to prohibit the sale of flavors that are addicting our keiki. Please pass this bill to keep our children safe from the harms of the tobacco industry.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Holly Kessler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Holly Kessler
Executive Director



HB756 HD2 Ban Flavored Tobacco

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Friday, Feb 21, 2025: 2:00: Room 308 Videoconference

Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition Supports HB756 HD2:

ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the current chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), a statewide organization for substance use disorder and co-occurring mental health disorder treatment and prevention agencies and recovery-oriented services.

We all know that vaping has candy flavors and names that appeal to youth and that vaping has extraordinarily high addictive nicotine levels resulting that vaping among Hawaii youth is at epidemic proportions. Ending flavored tobacco is a good idea to protect kids from increasing their likelihood of addiction.

- **Prevents Youth Initiation** – Flavored products are driving this epidemic, where 85% of youth e-cigarette users use flavored products. Most young people start using tobacco flavored products. Sweet flavors like fruit, mint, and candy mask the harshness of tobacco, making it more attractive to first-time users. Menthol is just as, if not more, harmful than any other flavor in tobacco. Notorious for its ability to mask the harshness of tobacco, menthol makes it easier to start and harder to quit.
- **Reduces Addiction Risks** – Nicotine is highly addictive, and early exposure increases the likelihood of long-term dependence. By removing flavored options, fewer kids will develop nicotine addiction. Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products will reduce the appeal of these products and protect our keiki from a lifetime of addiction.
- **Lowers Health Risks** – Flavored tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, can cause lung damage, heart disease, and other serious health issues. Preventing youth use helps avoid these long-term health consequences.
- **Disrupts Industry Targeting** – Tobacco companies have historically used flavored products to attract young users. Banning flavors takes away one of their key marketing tools for hooking new customers. Ending the sale of all flavored tobacco will advance health equity –In Hawai'i, 78% of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander smokers use menthol cigarettes (Hawai'i BRFS, 2008).

Let's join with the many cities and states that have restricted flavored tobacco, which effectively reduced youth vaping and smoking rates. Please **support Hawai'i's Public Health Efforts**

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and are available for questions.



1200 Ala Kapuna Street • Honolulu, Hawai'i 96819
Tel: (808) 833-2711 • Fax: (808) 839-7106 • Web: www.hsta.org

Osa Tui, Jr.
President

Logan Okita
Vice President

Cheney Kaku
Secretary-Treasurer

Ann Mahi
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Item: HB 756, HD2 – Relating to Health

Position: Support

Hearing: Friday, February 21, 2025, 2:00 pm, Room 308

Submitter: Osa Tui, Jr., President - Hawai'i State Teachers Association

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) **supports** HB 756, HD2 which prohibits the sale of flavored nicotine products and the mislabeling of e-liquids as nicotine free.

As many know, the dangers of flavored nicotine products, particularly for our youth, cannot be overstated. HSTA believes it is imperative to protect our keiki from the harmful effects of nicotine addiction and prevent another generation from falling victim to the tobacco industry's predatory tactics.

The statistics presented in HB 756, HD2 paint a clear picture of the alarming rise of flavored nicotine use among Hawai'i's youth, with products disguised as candy and local flavors to entice them. HSTA recommends passage of HB 756, HD2 to safeguard our keiki and ensure a healthier future for Hawai'i.

Mahalo.



**Parents And
Children Together**

**BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS
THAT MATTER MOST**

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 756 HD2 RELATING TO HEALTH

TO: Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, & Members,
House Committee on Finance
FROM: Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO
DATE: February 21, 2025 at 2:00 PM

Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports HB 756 HD2 Relating to Health, which prohibits the sale of flavored nicotine products and nicotine product flavor enhancers and the mislabeling of e-liquids as nicotine free.

PACT's mission is to work together with Hawaii's children, individuals, and families to create safe and promising futures. Allowing the tobacco/e-cig industry to prey on youth does not empower youth to choose the futures they want for themselves. Currently, flavors in tobacco and e-cig products attract youth to try them and the nicotine in these products creates an addiction. Our high school youth vaping rate at over 30% is double that of the national average and it is estimated that 21,000 premature deaths from smoking will happen in the future to children alive now.

(<https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/hawaii>).

Menthol flavored tobacco products must be included in this flavor ban because it is prevalent and preferred by young people. Menthol flavor masks the harsh flavor of tobacco, making it easier to continue smoking. Additionally, menthol tobacco use disproportionately impacts our Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities with 78% of NHPI smokers using menthol cigarettes. (Hawai'i BRFSS 2008).

We urge you to listen to the many voices of youth weighing in on this issue and requesting your help in ending this public health crisis. By implementing this preventive health policy, you will save the state millions in healthcare costs as well as lives.

Founded in 1968, PACT is a statewide community-based organization providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 15,000 people across the state annually, we help identify, address, and successfully resolve challenges through our 20 programs. Among our services are early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org if you have any questions.

Testimony of
Jonathan Ching
Government Relations Director

Before:
House Committee on Finance
The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

February 21, 2025
2:00 p.m.
Via Videoconference
Conference Room 308

Re: HB 756, HD2 Relating to Health

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on HB 756, HD2 which prohibits the sale of flavored nicotine products and the mislabeling of e-liquids as nicotine free, establishes penalties, and authorizes the Department of Health to appoint, commission, or contract for services of inspectors.

Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i SUPPORTS HB 756, HD2.

Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i is one of the nation's largest not-for-profit health plans, serving 12.6 million members nationwide, and more than 271,000 members in Hawai'i. In Hawai'i, more than 4,200 dedicated employees and more than 650 Hawai'i Permanente Medical Group physicians and advance practice providers work in our integrated health system to provide our members coordinated care and coverage. Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i has more than 20+ medical facilities, including our award-winning Moanalua Medical Center. We continue to provide high-quality coordinated care for our members and deliver on our commitment to improve the health of our members and the people living in the communities we serve.

Youth in Hawai'i experience tobacco-related harm at alarming rates. Approximately 1,800 youth in Hawai'i under the age of 18 will try cigarettes for the first time each year. In 2023, approximately 28.8% of high school students and 16.9% of middle school students in Hawai'i reported having used electronic tobacco products at least once. In the same year, 13.2% of high school students and 10.3% of middle school students in Hawai'i reported current use of electronic tobacco products. In 2023, approximately 12.1% of high school students in Hawai'i reported ever smoking cigarettes and 3.0% reported current cigarette use. A 2015 survey also found that an estimated 41,000 high school students in Hawai'i smoked their first cigarette before the age of 13.

To ensure the future health of our communities, we must help young people avoid becoming hooked on these addictive products. Flavored tobacco plays a key role in convincing young people to try these products. As such, **Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i supports ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including flavored e-cigarettes, as we view flavored tobacco as a threat to public health.**

Further, flavored tobacco is extremely prevalent in vaping products, the use of which continues to rise among teens. There are many risks of vaping for teens and young adults, including:

- Inhaled nicotine harms brain development and can lead to addiction and the use of more harmful tobacco products;
- Known short-term health effects and unknown long-term effects; and
- Flavoring and other ingredients may be toxic, and vaping still has negative second-hand smoke effects.

We are particularly concerned about the availability and appeal of flavored tobacco products to youth and we believe HB 756, HD2 is a significant step in restricting access to these dangerous products. This legislation is a positive step toward preventing another generation of young people from living with a lifetime of addiction.

We ask the committee to PASS HB 756, HD2. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



TO: The Honorable Kyle Yamashita, Chair
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Finance

FROM: Philip Bossert, Executive Director
Hawaii Association of Independent Schools

RE: **HB 756 HD2 – RELATING TO HEALTH
In Strong Support**

DATE: Friday, February 21, 2025; Agenda #3
2:00 p.m.; conference room 308 & videoconference

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee:

My name is Philip Bossert, and I am the Executive Director of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools.

The Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS) strongly supports HB 756 HD2.

HAIS is a membership organization that currently represents as its members 100 of Hawaii's independent K-12 schools; and, through its subsidiary, the Hawaii Council of Private Schools (HCPS), licenses all 112 private and parochial K-12 schools in the State.

Approximately 33,000 students attend Hawaii's private and parochial schools and all of them – especially those students of middle school and high school age – are endangered by the current vaping epidemic plaguing Hawaii. Vaping not only endangers the health of students in the present, but likely also for the rest of their lives.

HAIS and its member schools support HB 756 HD2 because, in creating effective regulations for the sale of e-cigarettes and flavored tobacco products to persons under the age of 21, it will make vaping both less attractive and more difficult to pursue by elementary and secondary school students and help to protect the current and future generations of Hawaii's citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 3:00:25 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Chon	Kainehe Liquor	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is David, and I have been a small business owner on Oahu for over four years. I am submitting this testimony in strong opposition to HB756, which seeks to ban the sale of flavored vapor and menthol products in Hawai'i. While I understand the concern for public health, I urge lawmakers to consider the devastating impact this bill will have on small businesses, as well as the unintended consequences that will follow.

As a local business owner, I have worked tirelessly to provide for my family, my employees, and my community. My store, like many others, is already struggling to survive amidst rising costs, supply chain disruptions, and economic uncertainty. If HB756 passes, it will force me and countless others into an impossible situation, stripping away a significant portion of our business overnight.

But this bill does more than hurt businesses, it fails to address the root issues of public health and consumer behavior. Prohibition does not eliminate demand; it merely pushes sales into unregulated markets. If menthol and vapor products are banned, customers will turn to online vendors, illicit sources, and even dangerous homemade alternatives. This does not protect public health, it makes the situation worse by eliminating age restrictions, quality control, and tax revenue that funds important state programs.

Furthermore, this bill unfairly targets responsible adult consumers who make informed choices. It does not acknowledge the many people who have used vaping products as a harm reduction alternative to smoking. Rather than enacting outright bans that drive consumers underground, the state should focus on enforcing existing regulations, preventing youth access, and investing in education and cessation programs.

I urge you to consider the real-world consequences of HB756. It will devastate small businesses, harm responsible consumers, and create a black market filled with unregulated products. This is not the solution to our health crisis it is a misguided policy that will do more harm than good.

Please vote in opposition to HB756 and work toward policies that protect both public health and the livelihoods of local businesses.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

David Cho

Local Business Owner, Oahu

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 3:07:22 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brian Char	BMA Mart	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brian, and I have been a proud local business owner in Honolulu for over 12 years. I am writing today in strong opposition to HB756. While I understand the intent behind this bill, I fear it will create devastating consequences for small business owners like myself, pushing many of us closer to the brink of closure while failing to adequately address the health crisis it aims to solve. Many store owners can't leave their stores to attend these in person hearings to share our very important concerns because staffing our stores is extremely difficult and very costly when these hearings can take all day. I would urge you to consider scheduling these with more lead time to ensure you are hearing the public voice.

Small businesses are the backbone of our community, yet we are constantly fighting to survive in an already challenging economic climate. Rising costs, increased regulations, and the lingering effects of the pandemic have left many of us hanging by a thread. HB756 would only add to this desperation, placing an undue burden on business owners who are simply trying to stay afloat and support our employees, our families, and our community.

The reality is that bills like these, which seek to outright abolish certain products or services rather than implement reasonable, phased solutions, do not fix the underlying health issues they seek to address. Instead, they drive commerce underground, encourage unregulated markets, and push consumers toward alternative sources, often without any safeguards or oversight. This not only fails to protect public health but also strips businesses of the ability to adapt and work toward practical solutions.

Furthermore, the unintended consequences of HB756 will be far-reaching. Local businesses will suffer losses that may be impossible to recover from, jobs will be lost, and consumers will seek out alternatives in ways that harm the very communities this bill seeks to protect. Rather than enacting sweeping prohibitions, we should be working together; "business owners, legislators, and health advocates to find balanced approaches that address health concerns without crushing the local economy.

I urge you to consider the real impact this bill will have on small businesses and oppose HB756. We need policies that support local businesses, not drive them out of existence.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Brian Char

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 3:40:11 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ellen Federoff	Kihei Charter School	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As the Director of Kihei Charter High School I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** [HB 756, HD2](#) which would prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Hawai'i. I see firsthand the problem of high school students using flavored vape products on a regular basis. Many students are addicted to these products and are developing health problems directly related to the use of these products. Currently it is way to easy for our youth to purchase these products. Please take the first step in saving our youth by prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products in Hawai`i.

Mahalo nui loa,

Ellen Federoff

High School Director, Kihei Charter School



*The
Store
With
Aloha*

ABC Stores
766 Pohukaina Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813-5391
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February 19, 2025

Chair Kyle T. Yamashita
Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi
House Committee on Finance

Re: ABC Stores Testimony of Opposing HB756 HD2

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and the House Committee on Finance, My name is John Mark Mageo, Employee Relations and Government Affairs Manager of ABC Stores and I am writing to you on behalf of ABC Stores. We operate in Hawaii, Las Vegas, Guam, and Saipan and employ over 2,200 residents. I am deeply concerned about the proposed legislation to remove flavored products from the market.

While the intention behind this legislation is to reduce demand for these products, it is important to recognize that it will not eliminate the demand. Instead, it will push sales to other streams of distribution where flavored products remain available, including the black market and illegal online sales. This shift will not only undermine the goal of the legislation but also create significant challenges for law enforcement.

Removing this segment of our business will result in major tax shortfalls, forcing the government to seek alternative sources of revenue. Hawaii residents have recently received tax relief due to extreme economic pressures. Increasing taxes in other areas to compensate for the loss of revenue from flavored products would be highly problematic and counterproductive.

The loss of revenue will also make it difficult, if not impossible, for businesses like ABC Stores to maintain current staffing levels. This will lead to job losses and economic instability for many families in our community. Furthermore, the state will face increased burdens on enforcement efforts if these regulations are imposed.

Repealing preemption would cost the state millions of dollars and create undue burdens on retailers across Hawaii. I urge you to consider the unintended consequences of passing this bill. It will have a detrimental impact on local businesses, the state's economy, and the livelihoods of many residents.

I hope you will take these concerns into account and reconsider the proposed legislation. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Mahalo,
John Mark Mageo
Employee Relations and Government Affairs Manager
(808) 597-3312
jmageo@abcstores.com



HB756_HD2 Flavored nicotine products

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair

Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

Friday, Feb 21, 2025: 2:00PM:Room 308 & Videoconference

Hina Mauka Strongly Supports HB756_HD2:

*ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS.
My name is Brian Baker. I am the Chief Operating Officer for Hina Mauka, a mental health and substance use disorder treatment and prevention agency for thousands of adults and adolescents on Oahu and Kauai, including recovery-oriented services and housing transitional living programs.*

**Flavored tobacco products are
an enticement for youth to begin
using and become lifelong users.**

Hina Mauka provides this testimony as a Prevention and Treatment agency, member of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), and as a member of the Tobacco Coalition.

We strongly support HB756_HD2, as there is an increasing trend, up from 70% of youth using a flavored tobacco product in 2019, to 80% in 2020, per the National Youth Tobacco Survey. (CDC, 2024)

This is a **LOCAL** problem. In Hawai'i, Native Hawaiian youth in high school have the highest rates of e-cigarette use (33.3%), followed closely by Pacific Islanders at 27.9%. (HHDW, 2023)

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and are available for questions.

References

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HHDW. (2023, March 30). "Hawai'i IBIS – Summary Health Indicator Report – E-Cigarettes – Current Smoking, High School." Retrieved from HHDW: hhdw.org/report/indicator/summary/VaporCurr_HS.html



Testimony Relating to Health in Support of Prohibiting Flavored Nicotine Sales

February 21, 2025

Lisa Dau, RN, Injury Prevention Coordinator
Keiki Injury Prevention Coalition (KIPC)

Rep. Kyle Yamashita, Chair; Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair; and Committee Members on Finance

Subject: Support for HB756 HD2 – Prohibiting Flavored Nicotine Sales

I strongly support HB756 HD2, which bans flavored nicotine products, prevents the mislabeling of e-liquids, and enforces penalties. Flavored nicotine attracts youth, leading to addiction, and mislabeled e-liquids mislead consumers. Strict oversight and enforcement are crucial to protect public health. Empowering the Department of Health with inspectors will ensure compliance and accountability.

This legislation is an important step in reducing nicotine addiction, especially among youth. I urge you to pass this bill.

Sincerely,
Lisa Dau, RN, MBA, BSN, CPSTI
KIPC, Injury Prevention Coordinator

The Keiki Injury Prevention Coalition's (KIPC) mission is to prevent and reduce injuries to children in Hawaii. <https://kipchawaii.org/>

Testimony Presented Before the

House Committee on FINANCE

HEARING: Friday, February 21, 2025 at 2:00PM

PLACE: Room 308 State Capital and via videoconference



by

Hawai'i – American Nurses Association (Hawai'i-ANA)

HB756, HD2– Relating to Health

Chair Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Vice Chair Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, and members of the House Committee on Finance, thank you for providing this opportunity for Hawai'i - American Nurses Association (Hawai'i-ANA) to provide testimony **in strong support of HB756, HD2**. This measure would prohibit the sale or distribution of all flavored nicotine products, including products with menthol, and prohibit the mislabeling of products as nicotine free, as a way to reduce the use of tobacco products by our youth in Hawai'i.

Hawai'i-ANA is the professional association for over 17,000 registered nurses who live and work in Hawai'i. We advocate for improvement of the health of vulnerable populations in Hawai'i. With 8 in 10 youth starting with a flavored tobacco product, a major way to address young people's use of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, is to prohibit the sale of flavors that attract youth in the first place and discourage them from trying these products. This legislation would remove the thousands of flavored tobacco products, as well as menthol cigarettes, that are addicting our keiki. Ending the

sale of flavored tobacco products will reduce the appeal of these products and protect our keiki from a lifetime of addiction.

Accordingly, the Hawai'i-ANA urges your favorable consideration of this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this measure.

Contact information for Hawai'i – American Nurses Association:

President, Dr. Denise Cohen, PhD, APRN, FNP-BC

Chair of Advocacy Committee: Dr. Linda Beechinor, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC

Phone (808) 779-3001. 500 Lunalilo Home Road, #27-E, Honolulu HI 96825



**Testimony to the House Committee on Finance
Friday, February 21, 2025; 2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 308
Via Videoconference**

RE: HOUSE BILL NO. 0756, HOUSE DRAFT 2, RELATING TO HEALTH.

Chair Yamashita, Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii Primary Care Association (HPCA) is a 501(c)(3) organization established to advocate for, expand access to, and sustain high quality care through the statewide network of Community Health Centers throughout the State of Hawaii. The HPCA **SUPPORTS** House Bill No. 0756, House Draft 2, RELATING TO HEALTH.

By way of background, the HPCA represents Hawaii's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs provide desperately needed medical services at the frontlines to over 150,000 patients each year who live in rural and underserved communities. Long considered champions for creating a more sustainable, integrated, and wellness-oriented system of health, FQHCs provide a more efficient, more effective and more comprehensive system of healthcare.

The bill, as received by your Committee, would prohibit the sale or distribution of all flavored nicotine products, including products with menthol, and prohibit the mislabeling of products as nicotine-free. This measure would take effect on July 1, 3000.

FQHCs have long seen first-hand how tobacco has literally destroyed the lives of our patients and their families. Because of the ubiquity of cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and now electronic smoking devices, the impacts of tobacco harms our citizenry on a generational basis with people experimenting at even earlier ages. Because of this, the HPCA supports efforts that would create disincentives for consumers to use these products.

Accordingly, the HPCA urges your favorable consideration of this measure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Public Affairs and Policy Director Erik K. Abe at 536-8442, or eabe@hawaiiipca.net.



Hawaii COPD Coalition
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(808)699-9839

February 19, 2025

Honorable Chair Representatives Kyle Yamashita
Honorable Vice-Chair Representative Jeanne Takenouchi
Members of the House Committees on Finance

RE: **Strong Support for HB756,HD1, Relating to Health (ban flavored nicotine)**

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of Finance Committee,

This measure is extremely critical to the health of the children of our state and our entire state as well. **We urge you to strongly support and vote in favor of HB756,HD1**, which will ban the sale of flavored nicotine products and mislabeled e-liquid products.

I am Executive Director of the Hawaii COPD Coalition and serve over 45,000 Hawaii adults diagnosed with COPD in Hawaii (with an estimated equal number still undiagnosed). Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease or COPD is an umbrella of diseases which include emphysema, chronic bronchitis and chronic asthma. Since 2007, I have worked in Hawaii, nationally and internationally with countless people who have had their lungs and lives horribly affected by tobacco and nicotine. Many of these people have become disabled and unable to perform jobs and hobbies they enjoyed, spending a lot more time and resources with healthcare providers and requiring support from society than they or any of us would like.

Sadly, our state is in the middle of a youth vaping epidemic! In Hawai'i one in three high school students and on in five middle school students reported "current use of e-cigarettes according to the Hawai'i YRBSS 2019! Of these youth, 8 in 10 youth currently using e-cigarettes reported using a flavored product, up from 7 in 10 in 2019 (National Youth Tobacco Survey). Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products will reduce the appeal of these products and protect our keiki from a lifetime of addiction.

Flavors in tobacco products entice youth, while the nicotine keeps them **hooked for life**. In 2020, 8 in 10 youth who currently use e-cigarettes reported using a flavored product, up from 7 in 10 in 2019 (National Youth Tobacco Survey). ***Our organization is daily working to help those whose lungs have been ruined by exposure to smoke and we are trying to reduce our numbers, NOT increase them.***

- Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products will reduce the appeal of these products and protect our keiki from a lifetime of addiction.

- Menthol is just as, if not more harmful than, any other flavored tobacco. Notorious for its ability to mask the harshness of tobacco, menthol makes it easier to start and harder to quit.
- We aim to protect our keiki and reduce the burden of tobacco in our communities, and we must include menthol.
- Ending the sale of flavored tobacco will advance health equity - disparities in tobacco use are due to the tobacco industry's history of marketing menthol cigarettes to youth and people of color.
- ***In Hawai'i, 78% of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander smokers use menthol cigarettes (Hawai'i BRFSS, 2008).***
- Mint and menthol-flavored e-cigarettes are one of the most popular flavors among youth.

It is well-established that nicotine is a HIGHLY addictive drug and impacts the developing brain. Pediatricians have reported the brain continues to develop and grow until the young adult is 26 years old! Studies have shown that using e-smoking devices result multiple harms to the lungs, as detailed on the John Hopkins website, [What Does Vaping Do to Your Lungs? | Johns Hopkins Medicine](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/what-does-vaping-do-to-your-lungs) at www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/what-does-vaping-do-to-your-lungs.

Menthol is at least as harmful as other tobacco and nicotine flavors. It is known for its ability to mask the harshness of tobacco and makes using nicotine easier to start and harder to quit. If our aim is to protect our vulnerable keiki and reduce the burden of tobacco in our communities, menthol MUST be included. Ending the sale of all flavored tobacco and nicotine will advance health equity—disparities in tobacco use are due to the tobacco industry's history of marketing menthol tobacco products to youth and people of color.

The March 2021 Tobacconomics Fact Sheet estimates that more than 3,000 smokers (5.6% of menthol smokers) would quit when flavored and menthol products are banned. Additionally, the fact sheet estimates 700 premature smoking-caused deaths will be avoided. Additionally, fewer youth will be initiated into smoking because without menthol and other flavors, nicotine is harsh. Preventing kids in Hawaii from becoming addicted smokers would secure millions of dollars in future health cost savings.

Please help protect the lungs and lives of our children from these very harmful products that are spreading virally in our communities and schools, from elementary through high school and beyond. **We urge you to pass HB756,HD1 and help it become law ASAP.** The Hawaii COPD Coalition thanks you very much for your careful consideration of this most important and timely bill.

Very truly yours,

Valerie Chang

Valerie Chang
Executive Director



Date: February 19, 2025

To: Rep. Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Rep. Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

From: Liza Ryan Gill, Campaign Manager, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids HI

Re: **SUPPORT for HB756 HD2, Relating to Health**

Hrg: February 21, 2025 at 2:00pm

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids & the Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund are pleased to **SUPPORT HB756 HD2** which would prohibit the sale of flavored nicotine products and the mislabeling of e-liquids as nicotine free. The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids is the nation's largest non-profit, non-governmental advocacy organization solely devoted to reducing tobacco use and its deadly toll by advocating for public policies that prevent kids from using tobacco and help smokers quit. It is encouraging to see states continue to take thoughtful, evidence-based steps to reduce the number of kids who start using tobacco and help tobacco users quit.

While Hawai'i has made great strides in reducing tobacco use, tobacco use remains the number one preventable cause of premature death and disease in Hawai'i and the nation, killing 490,000 Americans annually, including 1,400 in Hawai'i.¹

Prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products in retailers is a critical step that will help protect keiki living in Hawai'i from the unrelenting efforts by the tobacco industry to hook them to a deadly addiction. Flavored tobacco products are designed to alter the taste and reduce the harshness of tobacco products so they are more appealing and easy for beginners,

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Eliminating Tobacco-Related Disease and Death: Addressing Disparities—A Report of the Surgeon General* (p.15). Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2024. CDC, Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs, 2014, <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/stateandcommunity/guides/pdfs/2014/comprehensive.pdf>.

who are almost always kids. These products are pervasive and are marketed and sold in a variety of kid-friendly flavors. With their colorful packaging and sweet flavors, flavored tobacco products are often hard to distinguish from the candy displays near which they are frequently placed in retail outlets. **Eight out of ten youth who have ever used a tobacco product started with a flavored product.**²

New definitions are critical for capturing emerging products, like nicotine pouches and products flavored with synthetic cooling chemicals. Nicotine pouches, which are available in a variety of flavors and nicotine strengths,³ are increasingly popular among youth and are marketed as “completely smoke and tobacco-free.”⁴ Some of these products are marketed as commercial tobacco-free but use nicotine derived from tobacco, while other products use synthetic nicotine that is created in a lab. The number of youth using nicotine pouch products more than doubled in recent years, and the 2024 National Youth Tobacco Survey indicates that one in five youth who use nicotine pouches use them daily.⁵ The most popular brand of nicotine pouches is Philip Morris International’s Zyn.⁶ “Zynfluencers” on TikTok and other social media platforms promote the product to young people and have helped dramatically increase sales in recent years. Nicotine pouches like Zyn are following the JUUL playbook when it comes to attracting kids – viral presence on social media, easily concealable from parents and teachers, and available in a wide range of sweet flavors. Between 2018 and 2023, the number of Zyn cans shipped in the U.S. rose from 6 million to 334 million.⁷

Additionally, tobacco companies have introduced tobacco products with synthetic cooling agents that mimic the effects of menthol. A report released last year from the U.S. Surgeon General concluded that, “Natural and synthetic cooling agents that have been found in some tobacco products (a) act on different parts of the oral cavity and the respiratory system to enhance the experience of smoking or use of other tobacco products and (b) can mimic the pharmacological and somatosensory effects of menthol but may not have a distinguishing taste

² Ambrose, BK, et al., “Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, published online October 26, 2015.

³ Majmundar, A, et al., “Nicotine Pouch Sales Trends in the US by Volume and Nicotine Concentration Levels From 2019 to 2022,” *JAMA Network Open* 5(11):e2242235, 2022, doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.42235. World Health Organization (WHO) study group on tobacco product regulation, *Report on the scientific basis of tobacco product regulation: ninth report of a WHO study group*, WHO Technical Report Series, No. 1047, 2023, <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/372463/9789240079410-eng.pdf?sequence=1>.

⁴ Public Health Law Center & American Lung Association-California, *Zyn & The Rise In Popularity Of Nicotine Pouches*, August 2024, <https://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/Popularity-of-Nicotine-Pouches-FAQ.pdf>.

⁵ Park-Lee, E, et al., “E-Cigarette and Nicotine Pouch Use Among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2024,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* 73(35):774-778, September 5, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/pdfs/mm7335a3-H.pdf>.

⁶ Goldman Sachs, *Americas Tobacco: NielsenIQ Data thru 8/10: Total nicotine sales declines modestly accelerate*, August 20, 2024.

⁷ Public Health Law Center & American Lung Association-California, *Zyn & The Rise In Popularity Of Nicotine Pouches*, August 2024, <https://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/Popularity-of-Nicotine-Pouches-FAQ.pdf>.

or odor. Cooling agents, even those without a taste or odor, have the potential to increase the appeal of tobacco products, facilitate their use, and contribute to tobacco-related health disparities. Comprehensive flavor policies that account for these agents will better protect public health.”⁸ For example, “menthol-like” flavored cigarettes that contain synthetic cooling agents that mimic the effects of menthol, are branded and colorfully packaged just like their menthol predecessors and are marketed with terms like “smooth” and “fresh” just like menthols, have been introduced in states with flavor restrictions in attempt to evade the law.⁹ In addition, states that have passed flavor restrictions have seen the introduction of flavor enhancers, which are typically drops or flavored strips¹⁰ that can be added to non-flavored products to give them a flavor like menthol.¹¹

E-cigarettes and nicotine pouches with synthetic coolants have also become popular in recent years. The 2024 National Youth Tobacco Survey found that over half of youth e-cigarette users and nearly one-quarter of youth nicotine pouch users have used products with flavor names that include the word “ice” or “iced.”¹² In California, which prohibited the sale of flavored tobacco products as of December 2022, sales of e-cigarettes with cooling flavors have increased more than six-fold and sales of nicotine pouches with cooling flavors have increased more than eight-fold as companies seek to evade the state’s flavor law.¹³ California’s law was recently amended to prohibit tobacco products that elicit a cooling sensation, and Hawai’i should follow suit. **We are happy to see that HB756 HD2 includes definitions that encompass every product that contains nicotine, that is intended for human consumption as well as emerging products, like nicotine pouches and products flavored with synthetic cooling chemicals.**

Flavored Tobacco Products Are Popular Among Youth

Although tobacco companies claim to be responding to adult tobacco users’ demand for variety, it’s clear that flavored tobacco products play a key role in enticing new users, particularly kids, to a lifetime of addiction. This growing market of flavored tobacco products is undermining progress in reducing youth tobacco use.

⁸ HHS, *Eliminating Tobacco-Related Disease and Death: Addressing Disparities: A Report of the Surgeon General (p.8)*, 2024, <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-sgr-tobacco-related-health-disparities-full-report.pdf>.

⁹ Jabba, SVM, et al. (2023). “Synthetic Cooling Agent and Other Flavor Additives in “Non-Menthol” Cigarettes Marketed in California and Massachusetts After Menthol Cigarette Bans,” *JAMA*, 330(17), 1689-1691.

¹⁰ <https://www.smokersoutletonline.com/accessories/ocb-flavor-card-menthol.html>.

¹¹ Michael O. Chaiton et al., The use of flavour cards and other additives after a menthol ban in Canada, 30 *TOBACCO CONTROL* 601 (2021), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7856206/>.

¹² Park-Lee, E., et al., “E-Cigarette and Nicotine Pouch Use Among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2024,” *MMWR* 73(35):774-778, September 5, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/pdfs/mm7335a3-H.pdf>.

¹³ CDC Foundation, “Monitoring U.S. E-Cigarette Sales: National Trends,” <https://tobacomonitoring.org/>. CDC Foundation, “Monitoring Sales: Nicotine Pouch Trends,” https://tobacomonitoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Nicotine-Pouch-Brief_1.10.2025.pdf. Data from Circana, which includes e-cigarette sales data from convenience stores, gas stations and other retail store chains. Sales from the internet and tobacco-specialty stores, including vape shops, are not included.

These sweet products have fueled the popularity of e-cigarettes and cigars among youth. A government study found that **eight out of ten of kids who have ever used tobacco products started with a flavored product.**¹⁴ Across all tobacco products, the data is clear: flavored tobacco products are overwhelmingly used by youth as a starter product, and preference for flavors declines with age.

Nationally, e-cigarettes have been the most commonly used tobacco product among youth since 2014. Today, youth e-cigarette use remains a serious public health concern, with over 1.6 million youth, including 7.8% of US high schoolers, reporting current e-cigarette use in 2024, according to the National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS).¹⁵ Nearly 90% of youth e-cigarette users report using flavored products.¹⁶ According to the 2023 Hawai'i Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 13.2% of Hawai'i high school students and 10.3% of middle school students are current e-cigarette users.¹⁷

Kids are not just experimenting with e-cigarettes, but are using them frequently, leading to an addiction that is difficult to break. According to the 2024 NYTS, 42.1% of high school e-cigarette users reported vaping on 20 or more days/month, and 29.7% reported daily use.¹⁸ This youth addiction crisis has been fueled by the growth of high nicotine e-cigarettes—many contain as much nicotine as 200 cigarettes.¹⁹ Nicotine is a highly addictive drug that can have lasting damaging effects on adolescent brain development—the brain keeps developing until about age 25. In particular, nicotine use can harm the parts of the adolescent brain responsible for attention, learning, mood and impulse control.²⁰ The Surgeon General concluded that, “The use of products containing nicotine in any form among youth, including in e-cigarettes, is unsafe.”²¹

¹⁴ Ambrose, BK, et al., “Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, published online October 26, 2015.

¹⁵ Park-Lee, E., et al., “E-Cigarette and Nicotine Pouch Use Among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2024,” *MMWR* 73(35):774-778, September 5, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/pdfs/mm7335a3-H.pdf>.

¹⁶ Park-Lee, E., et al., “E-Cigarette and Nicotine Pouch Use Among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2024,” *MMWR* 73(35):774-778, September 5, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/pdfs/mm7335a3-H.pdf>.

¹⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data. Available at <https://nccd.cdc.gov/Youthonline/App/Default.aspx>.

¹⁸ Park-Lee, E., et al., “E-Cigarette and Nicotine Pouch Use Among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2024,” *MMWR* 73(35):774-778, September 5, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/pdfs/mm7335a3-H.pdf>.

¹⁹ Diaz, MC, et al., “Bigger, stronger and cheaper: growth in e-cigarette market driven by disposable devices with more e-liquid, higher nicotine concentration and declining prices,” *Tobacco Control*, published online August 3, 2023.

²⁰ HHS, *The Health Consequences of Smoking: 50 Years of Progress. A Report of the Surgeon General*, CDC, Office of Smoking and Health (OSH), 2014, <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/50-years-of-progress/index.html>. See also: CDC Office on Smoking and Health, “Quick Facts on the Risks of E-cigarettes for Kids, Teens, and Young Adults,” March 2019. Accessed August 9, 2019.

²¹ HHS, *E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults. A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2016.

Youth e-cigarette users are also at risk of smoking cigarettes. A 2018 report from the National Academies of Science, Engineering & Medicine found that “There is substantial evidence that e-cigarette use increases risk of ever using combustible tobacco cigarettes among youth and young adults.”²² More recent research confirms this finding.²³ Therefore, it is critical for any policy restricting sales of flavored tobacco products to include e-cigarettes.

While the FDA has had regulatory authority over e-cigarettes since 2016, it has been slow to implement the required premarket reviews for e-cigarettes. Under a federal court order, FDA faced a deadline of September 9, 2021 to determine whether e-cigarettes meet the statutory standard to stay on the market. However, the FDA failed to finish reviewing e-cigarette marketing applications by this deadline and illegal, flavored e-cigarettes still remain widely available. Recently released data from the Truth Initiative show that while the FDA has authorized 34 e-cigarette products for sale, these products only make up only 13.7% of the market, meaning that **86% of the e-cigarette market is for *unauthorized, illegal* products.**²⁴ Hawai’i can act much quicker than the FDA to protect from illegal, flavored e-cigarettes that target our keiki with varieties like lu’au punch and lychee ice.

Menthol Cigarettes Increase Youth Smoking and Exacerbate Health Disparities

No other flavored product contributes more to the death and disease caused by tobacco use than menthol cigarettes. Menthol cools and numbs the throat, reducing the harshness of cigarette smoke, thereby making menthol cigarettes more appealing to youth who are initiating smoking. As the only flavored cigarette left on the market, it’s also no surprise that menthol cigarettes are popular among youth. About half of youth who have ever tried smoking started with menthol-flavored cigarettes.²⁵ The FDA’s Tobacco Product Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC) has reported that:

- Menthol cigarettes increase the number of children who experiment with cigarettes and the number of children who become regular smokers, increasing overall youth smoking.
- Young people who initiate using menthol cigarettes are more likely to become addicted and become long-term daily smokers.

²² National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), *Public Health Consequences of E-Cigarettes*, 2018, <http://nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2018/public-health-consequences-of-e-cigarettes.aspx>.

²³ Berry, KM, et al., “Association of Electronic Cigarette Use with Subsequent Initiation of Tobacco Cigarettes in US Youths,” *JAMA Network Open*, 2(2), published online February 1, 2019; Pierce, JP, et al., “Use of E-Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products and Progression to Daily Cigarette Smoking,” *Pediatrics*, 147(2), published online January 11, 2021.

²⁴ Truth Initiative, U.S. retail sales data show 86% of e-cigarette sales are for illegal products, November 6, 2024, <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/tobacco-industry-marketing/us-retail-sales-data-show-86-e-cigarette-sales-are#:~:text=New%20research%20from%20Truth%20Initiative,the%20market%20are%20illegal%20products..>

²⁵ Ambrose, BK, et al., “Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, published online October 26, 2015.

There is also evidence that the industry has targeted the Hawaiian population. A Surgeon General’s report released last year found that, “The tobacco industry has viewed Native Hawaiian people as an important market for menthol cigarettes since at least the 1980s.”²⁶ In the 1980s, a marketing group strategized how to reach Native Hawaiians with Kool cigarettes, a popular menthol brand. The agency recommended that Kool employ “ethnic advertising” in Hawai’i, recommending the use of models that were “fun, happy-go-lucky young people in their 20s...[who have] full social calendars and spend a lot of time outdoors at the beach... people who display what islanders call the aloha spirit.”²⁷ An assessment of tobacco advertising in Hawai’i found that Kool, a popular menthol brand, was the most heavily advertised brand across Hawai’i in the early 2000s.²⁸ The 2020 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System shows that prevalence is high among ethnic groups that comprise a significant proportion of Hawaii’s population, with 79% of Filipino smokers, 78% of Native Hawaiian smokers, and 69% of Japanese smokers usually smoking menthol cigarettes. The CDC estimates that prohibiting the sale of menthol cigarettes will help 4,400 Hawai’ians quit smoking.²⁹

Cigar Smoke Poses Many of the Same Health Risks as Cigarettes

Cigars come in hundreds of kid-friendly flavors like “Berry Fusion,” “Cocoa,” and “Cherry Dynamite,” and can be as cheap as 3 for 99 cents. These flavors increase youth initiation, progression to regular use and are associated with greater potential for addiction.³⁰ While cigar smoking is often perceived as an activity of older men, a troubling number of today’s cigar smokers are youth and young adults. The wide assortment of flavors, colorful packaging, and affordability of many cigars make them an appealing tobacco product for youth. In 2024, 330,000 youth were cigar smokers and cigar smoking among Black high schoolers is double that of White high schoolers.³¹ The 2024 Surgeon General’s report found that, “Tobacco industry documents suggest that product design and flavoring was a deliberate and iterative process to optimize the appeal of cigarillos and little cigars to youth, women, and African American people who smoke, especially those who smoke mentholated tobacco products.”³² Cigar smoke is

²⁶ HHS, *Eliminating Tobacco-Related Disease and Death: Addressing Disparities: A Report of the Surgeon General* (p.15), 2024, <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-sgr-tobacco-related-health-disparities-full-report.pdf>.

²⁷ Anderson, SJ, “Marketing of menthol and consumer perceptions: a review of tobacco industry documents,” *Tobacco Control*, 20(Suppl 2): ii20-ii28, 2011.

²⁸ Glanz, K, et al., “Operation Storefront Hawaii: Tobacco Advertising and Promotion in Hawaii Stores,” *Journal of Health Communication*, 11(7): 699-707, 2006.

²⁹ CDC, Menthol Fact Sheets—Hawaii, https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/menthol/state-menthol-fact-sheets.html#HI.

³⁰ FDA, *Scientific Assessment of the Impact of Flavors in Cigar Products*, March 2022, <https://www.fda.gov/media/157593/download>.

³¹ Jamal, A, et al., *MMWR* 73(41):917-924, October 17, 2024.

³² HHS, *Eliminating Tobacco-Related Disease and Death: Addressing Disparities—A Report of the Surgeon General*, 2024, at 254.

composed of the same toxic and carcinogenic constituents found in cigarette smoke.³³ Cigar smoking causes cancer of the oral cavity, larynx, esophagus and lung, and daily cigar smokers have an increased risk of heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and an aortic aneurysm.³⁴

The scientific evidence leaves no doubt that menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products increase the number of people, particularly kids, who try the product, become addicted and die a premature death as a result. Prohibiting the sale of menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products is an important step toward protecting our children from the tobacco industry's aggressive efforts to hook children to a deadly, addictive product. This issue is about protecting our kids and saving lives.

Thank you for your consideration on HB756 HD2. This policy has the strong potential to save lives in Hawai'i.

Sincerely,

Liza Ryan Gill
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids HI

³³ Pickworth, WB, et al., "Dual Use of Cigarettes, Little Cigars, Cigarillos, and Large Cigars: Smoking Topography and Toxicant Exposure," *Tobacco Regulatory Science* 3(Suppl 1):S72-S83, April 2017. Chen, J, et al., "Biomarkers of Exposure among U.S. Cigar Smokers: An Analysis of 1990-2012 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) Data," American Association for Cancer Research, 2014.

³⁴ NCI, *Cigars: Health Effects and Trends*, 1998.



To: The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Consumer Finance

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Public Policy Manager
Sarielyn Curtis, External Affairs Specialist

Hearing: Friday, February 21, 2025, 2:00 p.m., Conference Room 308

RE: **HB756 HD2 Relating to the Health**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of HB756 HD2**. This measure prohibits the sale of flavored nicotine products and nicotine product flavor enhancers and the mislabeling of e-liquids as nicotine free; establishes penalties for violations; authorizes the Department of Health to appoint, commission, or contract for services of inspectors; and establishes positions and appropriates funds.

Founded in 1994 by Hawai‘i’s community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 70,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 37 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai‘i’s only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

Nicotine is the highly addictive chemical compound found in tobacco, which is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Hawai‘i and across the nation. In Hawai‘i alone, tobacco use claims 1,100 lives each year and creates \$336 million in annual healthcare costs directly attributed to smoking.¹ Most people who start smoking are younger than 18, and many begin tobacco use before high school.

Hawai‘i is experiencing a youth vaping epidemic, and we must take action to protect the health of our young people from life-threatening addiction. Flavored electronic Smoking Devices (ESDs) and e-liquids are designed and marketed specifically to entice youth. Appealing flavors have driven youth tobacco usage to nearly 31% of high school students and 18% of middle school students, both reporting e-cigarettes use within the past 30 days.² And 81% of youth who use tobacco started with

¹ <https://health.hawaii.gov/tobacco/home-2/>

² hawaiihealthmatters.org/index.php?module=indicators&controller=index&action=dashboard&id=83016762154173692



flavored products.³ According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, flavors are one of the main reasons young people initiate tobacco use.⁴

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) youth are disproportionately affected by flavored nicotine products. According to the 2023 Center for Disease Control Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 14.1% of NHPI students were e-cigarette users.⁵ Approximately 78% of NHPI smokers report using menthol cigarettes. Prohibiting flavored nicotine products will help to address health disparities which is consistent with AlohaCare's mission and our State's health equity and social determinants of health priorities.⁶

Prohibiting the sale of flavored nicotine products will greatly reduce the number of users in our State and most importantly will discourage youth initiation. Flavored nicotine and tobacco consumption result in exacerbated health disparities, poor health outcomes, and increased healthcare costs for the State. We greatly appreciate your consideration and urge members to pass this measure.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of HB756 HD2.**

³ [Home - Flavors Hook Kids](#)

⁴ [Protecting Children and Adolescents From Tobacco and Nicotine | Pediatrics | American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

⁵ [assets.tobaccofreekids.org/factsheets/0422.pdf](#)

⁶ [Hawai'i Medicaid State Plan and Demonstration](#)

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 7:28:10 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tommy Noyes	The Friends of Kamalani & Lydgate Park	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

For over thirty years The Friends of Kamalani & Lydgate Park have worked hard to improve conditions for families on Kauai.

Far too many of our keiki are of becoming addicted to nicotine, and your advancing HB 756 HD2 can help prevent that deplorable and expensive trend.

Currently 13.2% of high school students and 10.3% of middle school students still report “current use” of e-cigarettes.

With 8 in 10 kids starting with a flavored tobacco product, we need to prohibit the sale of flavors that are addicting our keiki.

Please pass this bill to keep our children safe from the harms of the tobacco industry.

Mahalo,

Tommy A. Noyes
General Coordinator
The Friends of Kamalani and Lydgate Park



1325 G Street, NW, Suite 950 • Washington, D.C. 20005 • 202.464.6200 • taxfoundation.org

Memorandum

Date: February 20, 2025

To: Members of the House Committee on Finance

From: Jacob Macumber-Rosin, Excise Tax Policy Analyst, Tax Foundation

Subject: Hawaii HB 756 Regarding a Ban on Flavored Nicotine Products

House Bill 756 would prohibit the sale of flavored nicotine products. This ban would likely cost the state of Hawaii more than \$25 million in revenue per year. On top of the declining sales, illicit trade would likely increase substantially.

Data from statewide bans in Massachusetts and California provide evidence that flavor bans are a costly and ineffective means of addressing harms associated with nicotine consumption. Massachusetts saw a \$125 million decline in revenue the first year of its flavor ban. California saw annualized revenue decline by roughly \$300 million, surpassing the state's revenue loss estimates by more than a third.¹

Identifying the cause of the decline in legal purchases following the flavor ban is paramount to determining the effects of the policy. Menthol smokers may have quit smoking after no longer being able to purchase their preferred products or they may be continuing to smoke by buying products across state borders or products that have been smuggled into the state.

In the year following the Massachusetts flavored cigarette ban, roughly 90 percent of the decline in state cigarette sales simply shifted to neighboring states. While Hawaii does not have neighboring states that consumers could turn to for their preferred products, there is already an established illicit market for nicotine products.² A flavor ban is likely to induce illicit activity as smugglers from the mainland or overseas fill the demand prohibited from legal market transactions.

Banning flavored products other than combustible cigarettes also thwarts efforts to convert smokers to users of less harmful nicotine products. The US Food and Drug Administration

¹ Adam Hoffer, "California Flavored Tobacco Ban May Cost More than \$300 Million in First Year," Tax Foundation, Feb. 24, 2023, <https://taxfoundation.org/california-flavored-tobacco-ban-revenue/>.

² Department of the Attorney General, "Attorney General Lopez Is Sounding the Alarm Over Illegal Vapes Being Sold in Hawai'i," State of Hawai'i, Jan. 16, 2025, <https://ag.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/News-Release-2025-03.pdf>.

approved reduced-harm products for sale in the US, including flavored e-cigarettes,³ heat-not-burn sticks, and oral tobacco products.⁴ Any move that limits consumer access to these products will result in persistently higher smoking rates and worse public health outcomes.

Legislatures are charged with the difficult task of striking the right balance among reducing the harm caused by smoking, raising enough revenue to fund smoking cessation and other public health programs, and maintaining a legal, well-regulated marketplace where participants can safely transact. As you consider these matters, we are happy to be a resource and would be delighted to provide you with more research on this topic.

³ US Food and Drug Administration, "FDA Authorizes Marketing of Four Menthol-Flavored E-Cigarette Products After Extensive Scientific Review," Jun. 21, 2024, <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fdaauthorizes-marketing-four-menthol-flavored-e-cigarette-products-after-extensive-scientific>.

⁴ US Food and Drug Administration, "Modified Risk Tobacco Products," Jul. 15, 2024, <https://www.fda.gov/tobaccoproducts/advertising-and-promotion/modified-risk-tobacco-products>.

Date: February 21, 2025
To: The House Committee on Finance
From: Members of the University of Hawaii Student Health Advisory Council
Re: Support for HB 756, Relating to Ending the Sale of Flavored Tobacco
Hearing: Friday, February 21 at 2:00 PM at Conference Room 308

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in SUPPORT of HB 756 which would prohibit the sale and distribution of flavored tobacco products including menthol.

The Student Health Advisory Council has played a pivotal role in the development and implementation of health policies and tobacco education on the UH System campuses. We remain deeply committed to the mission of reducing the use of all tobacco products, including electronic smoking devices, among adolescents and young adults.

The sale of products like Flume and other popular electronic smoking devices, it is increasingly clear that these products are addicting a whole generation of youth to a harmful product. The Surgeon General has gone so far as to declare youth e-cigarette use an epidemic, and states that there is an urgent need to protect young people from a lifetime of nicotine addiction and associated health risks.

The sale of candy and fruit-flavored tobacco products entices young people to start using these harmful products which can lead to addiction and cause damage to the developing brain. Menthol should also be banned it masks the harmfulness of tobacco and is one of the very popular flavors among youth. Flavored tobacco products also increase individuals' risk for dual use of vape products and combustible cigarettes. Banning the sale of flavored and menthol tobacco products will help with the health issues disproportionately affecting those of lower socioeconomic status and people of color.

The banning of flavored tobacco products as well as providing tobacco education and cessation programs without monetary penalties for youth, is imperative if we are committed to protecting the health and well-being of our communities. Therefore, we urge you to support this measure and prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products including menthol in the State of Hawai'i.

Mahalo,
Student Health Advisory Council



Hawaii Dental Association

Committee: House Finance

Time/Date: 2:00 p.m., February 21, 2025

Location: State Capitol Conference Room 308 and via Videoconference

Re: HB 756, HD2, Relating to Health

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

The Hawaii Dental Association (HDA) is a professional association comprised of approximately 950-member dentists. **We are in support of HB 756, HD2**, relating to health. This bill will prohibit the sale of flavored tobacco products and nicotine product flavor enhancers and the mislabeling of e-liquids as nicotine free.

HDA expresses its opposition to use of oral tobacco, including vaping nicotine from e-cigarettes, and urges people using any type of tobacco product to quit. Tobacco use is causally associated with higher rates of tooth decay, receding gums, periodontal disease, mucosal lesions, bone damage, tooth loss, jawbone loss and more. That is why the Hawaii Dental Association, like the American Dental Association, is working with dentists, educators, public health officials, lawmakers, and the public to prevent and, hopefully, eliminate the use of all tobacco products. HDA supports regulatory and legislative action to ban the sale and distribution of all e-cigarette and vaping products, with the exception of those approved by the FDA for tobacco cessation purposes and made available by prescription only. We will continue to support legislation aimed at enhancing and promoting oral health.

HDA is a statewide membership organization representing dentists practicing in Hawaii and licensed by the State of Hawaii's Board of Dentistry. HDA members are committed to protecting the oral health and well-being of the people of Hawaii, from keiki to kupuna and everyone in between.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 756, HD2.



HIPHI Board

May Okihiro, MD, MS
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John A. Burns School of Medicine, Native
Hawaiian Research Office

HIPHI Initiatives

Coalition for a
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community-Based Research &
Evaluation

Community Health
Worker Initiatives

COVID-19 Response

Environmental Health

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free Coalitions

Hawai'i Farm to School Network

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging &
Community Living

Public Health Workforce Development

Date: February 20, 2025

To: Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

RE: Strong Support for HB 756 HD2, Relating to Health

Hrg: Friday, February 21, 2025 at 2:00 PM, Room 308

The Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawai'i, a program of Hawai'i Public Health Institute,¹ is in **strong support of HB 756 HD2** which would end the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, statewide.

Tobacco-related disease continues to be the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, resulting in 480,000 deaths annually,² with 1,400 of those deaths happening each year in Hawai'i.³ 95% of adult cigarette smokers started before they turned 21 years of age,⁴ so it's clear that to eliminate the harms of tobacco in our society, we need to prevent youth from ever starting. 81% of Hawai'i youth who use tobacco started with a flavored product, and by ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, Hawai'i can prioritize the health and safety of our future generations.⁵

A report by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, issued in 2013, found that menthol cigarettes led to increased smoking initiation among youth and young adults, more significant addiction, and decreased success in quitting smoking.⁶ Candy, sweet, and menthol-flavored tobacco attracts youth and makes nicotine tolerable. The widespread availability of flavored tobacco products has such a negative impact on public health that nearly 400 localities have passed restrictions on the sale of flavored tobacco products, and over 200 of those communities restrict the sale of menthol cigarettes as well.⁷ The problem has been affecting youth in Hawai'i for so long, in the past year and a half, three out of the four counties in Hawai'i have already passed legislation prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products. These policies though are unable to go into effect without state legislation to restore the counties' ability to regulate the sales of tobacco products.

Flavored products are driving youth use.

Flavors in tobacco products entice youth, and nicotine keeps them addicted. In 2024, 8 in 10 youth who use e-cigarettes reported using a flavored product. Of youth e-cigarette users, 87.6% use flavored products, and fruit, candy, and *mint* are reported as the most popular flavors.⁸ Most of the flavored e-cigarette products used by youth contain extremely high levels of nicotine. One 5% strength nicotine e-cigarette marketed as containing 5,000 puffs contains as much nicotine as 30 packs of cigarettes.⁹ Additionally, the tobacco industry continues to



develop, market, and promote new flavored products like nicotine pouches that are growing in popularity among youth. Ending the sale of **all** flavored tobacco products will reduce their appeal and protect our children from a lifetime of addiction.

Many flavored tobacco products are being sold illegally.

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the agency that regulates the marketing, manufacturing and distribution of tobacco products, the vast majority of flavored electronic smoking devices are illegal. Beginning in 2019, the FDA has outlined a formal process for manufacturers of electronic smoking devices to apply for authorization to be marketed and sold in the United States. To date, the FDA has only granted marketing authorization orders for 34 e-cigarette products. These products were authorized because the FDA characterized them as having a public health benefit, to be used as a cessation tool, while at the same time not appealing to youth.

Menthol is a significant risk to health in Hawai'i.

Tobacco companies use menthol as a calculated tactic to hook new consumers. Menthol's cooling and numbing properties mask the harshness of tobacco. The tobacco industry aggressively targets its marketing to certain populations, including young people, women, and racial and ethnic minority groups. Menthol is one of the most popular flavors in Hawai'i, with 80% of Native Hawaiian smokers and 70% of Filipino smokers using menthol cigarettes.¹⁰

Studies show that youth and young adults are more likely to try a menthol cigarette as their first cigarette, and those who first start with a menthol cigarette are more likely to continue smoking. In Hawai'i, 63% of those who smoke use menthol cigarettes compared to 28% who smoke them nationally.¹¹ Menthol enhances the effects of nicotine, which is an addictive drug. Menthol can make tobacco products even more addictive, and in recent years, tobacco companies have increased the amount of nicotine in some menthol cigarettes. If menthol cigarettes were no longer available, an estimated 4,400 additional adults in Hawai'i who smoke would quit smoking.¹²

Hawai'i voters want regulations.

In a December 2024 poll¹³ of registered Hawai'i voters conducted by Ward Research on behalf of the Coalition, 74% support a law prohibiting all flavors, including menthol, of tobacco products, and e-cigarettes. In addition, 73% of respondents said that school-aged children vaping or using e-cigarettes is a major problem and 71% believe that the use of e-cigarettes or vaping devices is harmful for Hawai'i's children, teens and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong **support of HB 756 HD2**. By passing this legislation with the suggested amendments, the legislature sends a strong, clear message to the public that our state is committed to uplifting the health and well-being of its residents and showing that community health is more important than tobacco profits.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kevin Reavis'.



Kevin Ramirez
Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawai'i Program Manager
Hawai'i Public Health Institute

1 The Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawai'i (Coalition) is a program of the Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI) that is dedicated to reducing tobacco use through education, policy, and advocacy. With more than two decades of history in Hawai'i, the Coalition has led several campaigns on enacting smoke-free environments, including being the first state in the nation to prohibit the sale of tobacco and electronic smoking devices to purchasers under 21 years of age.

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, May 4). *Burden of cigarette use in the U.S.* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/resources/data/cigarette-smoking-in-united-states.html>

3 *The toll of tobacco in Hawaii.* Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. (n.d.). <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/hawaii>

4 Commissioner, O. of the. (n.d.). *FDA issues final rule increasing the minimum age for certain restrictions on tobacco sales.* U.S. Food and Drug Administration. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-issues-final-rule-increasing-minimum-age-certain-restrictions-tobacco-sales>

5 Truth Initiative. *Flavors.* June 2021. https://truthinitiative.org/sites/default/files/media/files/2021/06/Truth_FlavoredTobacco_FactSheet2021_FINAL.pdf

6 Commissioner, O. of the. (n.d.-b). *FDA issues final rule increasing the minimum age for certain restrictions on tobacco sales.* U.S. Food and Drug Administration. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-issues-final-rule-increasing-minimum-age-certain-restrictions-tobacco-sales>

7 Bach, L. (2025, January 8). *States & localities that have restricted the sale of flavored tobacco products.* Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. <https://assets.tobaccofreekids.org/factsheets/0398.pdf>

8 Products, C. for T. (n.d.). *Results from the annual National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS).* U.S. Food and Drug Administration. <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey>

9 Stanford University Tobacco Prevention Toolkit. (n.d.). *Factsheets.* <https://med.stanford.edu/tobaccopreventiontoolkit/take-and-teach/toolkit-factsheets.html>

10 Matters, H. H. (n.d.-a). *Hawaii health matters.* Hawaii. <https://www.hawaiihealthmatters.org/indicators/index/view?indicatorId=12619&localeId=14&localeChartIdxs=1%7C2%7C6>

11 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, March 28). *Sociodemographic and temporal differences in menthol cigarette use among us adults who smoke, 1999-2018.* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2024/23_0291.htm

12 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024a, February 16). *State menthol fact sheets.* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/menthol/state-menthol-fact-sheets.html#HI

13 This study by Ward Research, Inc. summarizes findings from a phone survey among n=700 Hawai'i registered voters (maximum sampling error +/- 3.7%), conducted between October 25 to November 22, 2024.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 10:47:12 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gerald Morita	Cigarettes and Things	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gerald Morita, and I have been a business owner in Hawai'i for the past 14 years. I strongly oppose HB 756 due to its unintended consequences, which will negatively impact public health and community safety. While I support efforts to reduce youth access to tobacco and vapor products, this bill goes too far by banning FDA-authorized menthol and flavored vapor products that have been proven to help adult smokers transition away from combustible cigarettes. By removing these harm reduction alternatives from the legal market, the state risks backtracking on public health progress and forcing adult consumers back to traditional tobacco products, which are significantly more harmful.

Additionally, prohibiting these products will not eliminate demand—it will merely shift sales to unregulated sources, creating a thriving black market where there are no age restrictions, safety standards, or oversight. We have seen similar outcomes in other jurisdictions where flavor bans have been enacted, leading to increased youth access rather than reducing it. As a business owner, I have always prioritized compliance with age verification laws, but this bill undermines responsible retailers while empowering illicit sellers who operate without consequence. This approach ultimately makes it harder to protect minors and increases risks for consumers who may unknowingly purchase unsafe, unregulated products.

I urge lawmakers to consider more effective, balanced solutions that target youth prevention without harming adult consumers and responsible businesses.

Rather than banning menthol and flavored vapor products outright, the state should focus on enforcing existing regulations, strengthening penalties for illegal sales, and promoting public education on the risks of youth vaping. HB 756 will create more problems than it solves, and I respectfully ask the committee to vote against it. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Gerald Morita

Cigarettes and Things



Chair Yamashita
Vice Chair Takenouchi
Members of the Committees on Finance

On behalf of the Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawai'i's (CTFH) Youth Council, thank you for allowing us to submit testimony in **strong support of HB756_HD2**.

The CTFH Youth Council is a nationally recognized group of youth leaders fighting to envision and create a Hawai'i centered on uplifting community public health beyond the reaches of Big Tobacco. Our council comprises middle school, high school, and college students, with representation from across Hawai'i's counties. We have been working to end the sale of flavored tobacco products for the past seven years.

Hawai'i is facing a youth vaping epidemic. Hawai'i high school and middle school students have disproportionately high use rates of e-cigarette products. Containing toxic chemicals like nicotine and formaldehyde, these products have long-term health impacts, significantly harming the developing brain, altering nerve cell functioning, and negatively impacting heart and lung function. Without policy action, over 21,000 Hawai'i youth alive today will die from tobacco-related illness if smoking rates don't change.

Central to the youth vaping epidemic is an industry with a troubling history in our island home. From exploiting Native Hawaiian labor on tobacco plantations to the image of sexualized "hula girls" on cigarette advertisements, Big Tobacco has capitalized on Hawai'i's unique culture and legacy of colonialism to turn a profit off the backs of the most vulnerable. Of those groups, youth have often been the most targeted, in Hawai'i and beyond.

For many, commercial tobacco use has manifested into a coping mechanism, creating a temporary sense of relaxation to deal with struggles like anxiety, body dysmorphia, and even intergenerational trauma, increasing dependence on the device while preserving the underlying symptoms—making e-cigarettes a deadly tool for profit in a worsening crisis of youth mental health. Today, consistent with the countless stories of Hawai'i youth fighting nicotine addiction or watching their friends and family do so, Big Tobacco is exploiting our people, our culture, and our vulnerabilities through the use of flavored tobacco products.

Aloha Sun Juice, Lilikoi Lychee, Pass-O-Guava Nectar, Luau Punch, and POG are just a few of the more than 15,500 e-cigarette flavors, often designed specifically to entice local youth. It comes as no surprise, then, that 81% of youth who ever used tobacco started with a flavored product, and 97% of youth who vape currently use a flavored product.

Menthol, in particular, one of the most popular flavors among Hawai'i youth, uses added chemicals to create a cooling sensation that, coupled with its minty flavor, makes it easier to start vaping and harder to quit. The industry, which considers Hawai'i a "Menthol State," has invested heavily in promoting these products across the islands, driving public health disparities in Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities, with 78% of smokers from these communities using menthol cigarettes. Flavors, then, are the pinnacle of Big Tobacco's modern design for Hawai'i—creating devices that specifically market to and addict the communities whose systemic vulnerabilities are a direct consequence of the history of exploitation they participate in.

The industry won't go down without a fight. Spending \$22.2 million annually on marketing and hundreds of thousands on lobbying in Hawai'i alone, the tobacco industry's relentless presence in daily life on the islands isn't an accident—it's intentional.

Banning the sale of *all* flavored tobacco products would work to end this deadly cycle of addiction, manipulation, and exploitation. It's not just Hawai'i youth who support this. A 2024 Ward Research poll of registered voters in Hawaii found that the vast majority of voters agree, too: 74% support a ban on all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes. We have also received endorsements from over a hundred organizations listed below.

Last, the Hawaii Attorney General's office recently sent [a letter warning 800 tobacco retailers](#) in Hawaii to stop selling illegal flavored products, which have flooded the market here in Hawaii and across the country. Hundreds of illegal products still fill their shelves. The photo below was taken on Feb. 16, 2025, a month after the notification went out. None of the vape products in the photo have been authorized for sale by the FDA. This same retailer has submitted testimony against this bill warning that this bill will create a black market, the photo clearly shows they are the black market and are just trying to protect their illegal profits.



The FDA has approved 34 devices, only one of which is flavored, yet the most popular brands with Hawai'i youth are still widely available, We can't depend on the FDA to crack down on these retailers; we need the state to take action by passing **HB756_HD2!**

Mahalo,
Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawai'i Youth Council

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



ANNE E. LOPEZ
ATTORNEY GENERAL

MATT DVONCH
FIRST DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
Ke 'Oihana O Ka Lolo Kuhina
CRIMINAL JUSTICE DIVISION – TOBACCO ENFORCEMENT UNIT
425 QUEEN STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
Ph. (808) 586-1203
Fax. (808) 586-1224
EMAIL: atg.tobacco@hawaii.gov

January 16, 2025

Dear Tobacco Retailer:

The State of Hawaii's Department of the Attorney General ("the Department") is aware that retailers, distributors, and others may be distributing and selling unauthorized and illegal tobacco products to Hawaii consumers. This includes electronic smoking devices (ESDs, also commonly referred to as e-cigarettes) and oral nicotine pouch products. Nicotine is an addictive substance, and unauthorized products may contain additional dangerous ingredients not listed on the packaging, putting Hawaii consumers at risk.

For a tobacco product or a product containing nicotine to be sold legally in Hawaii or anywhere in the United States, it must be authorized by the Food and Drug Administration ("FDA"). Without this authorization, we cannot verify what ingredients these products contain and whether they are safe. To date, only 34 e-cigarettes¹ and 4 oral nicotine products (none of which are oral nicotine pouches)² have been authorized by the FDA to be sold in the United States.

Please review the enclosed list of e-cigarettes that have been authorized by the FDA as of this letter's date, to ensure that you are not displaying for sale, selling, shipping, or assisting in the sale or distribution of illegal e-cigarettes. Any e-cigarettes not on the enclosed list have not been authorized by the FDA and are not legal to sell in Hawaii.

You may also access an up-to-date, searchable FDA database for authorized products at the following website: <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/searchtobacco/>. The Department asks that you remove from your shelves any products not authorized for

¹ A list of the e-cigarettes authorized by the FDA is attached

² The authorized oral nicotine products are Verve Discs Blue Mint, Verve Discs Green Mint, Verve Chews Blue Mint, and Verve Chews Green Mint

Page 2
January 16, 2025

sale and return them to their distributor or manufacturer, keeping in mind that these products may be considered hazardous materials.

As a reminder, electronic smoking devices (ESDs) and e-liquids are now included in the Cigarette Tax and Tobacco Tax Law, found in chapter 245 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS). Wholesalers and dealers of ESDs and e-liquids in the State of Hawaii are required to have a tobacco license issued by Hawaii's Department of Taxation (DOTAX). DOTAX may suspend, revoke, or decline to renew any tobacco license for good cause, which may include instances where a licensee has failed to comply with federal law pertaining to the sale, importation, acquisition, possession, distribution, or transportation of tobacco products. (See HRS §245-2). Recent changes in the law also include new criminal offenses relating to the shipment of tobacco products, including ESDs and e-liquids, to a person or entity in Hawaii that does not hold a tobacco license issued by DOTAX.

The Department appreciates your business' partnership in keeping illegal products off shelves, especially unauthorized, flavored e-cigarettes that could fall into the hands of children. We urge you to take all steps to ensure that you are complying with all existing state laws, which the Department enforces, and federal laws. The Department recognizes that online sales of these products are also an issue and regularly pursues actions to address such violations.

If you have any questions regarding this matter or if you have any information regarding persons or businesses that may be selling these unauthorized and illegal e-cigarettes and vaping products, please do not hesitate to contact us at atg.tobacco@hawaii.gov or by calling the Department's Tobacco Enforcement Unit at 808-586-1203.

We appreciate your help in putting an end to the distribution and sale of these unauthorized and illegal products in Hawaii.

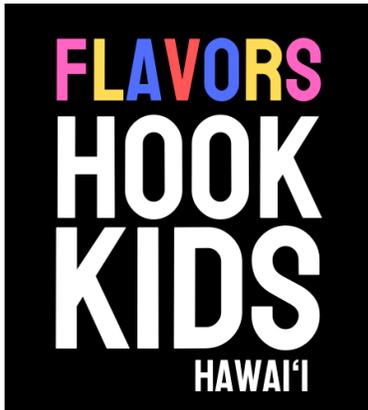
Sincerely,



Richard Stacey
Deputy Attorney General

Enclosure

PARTIAL LIST OF SUPPORTERS



HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS

'Ohana Health Plan
Adventist Health – Castle
Aloha Care
AMA/HMA Student Chapter at JABSOM
American Academy of Pediatrics – Hawaii Chapter
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
Bay Clinic Inc.
Blue Zones Project
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawaii
Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawai'i, a program of the Hawai'i Public Health Institute
Hamakua Kohala Health Centers
Hawaii – American Nurses Association (Hawaii-ANA)
Hawaii COPD Coalition
Hawaii Dental Hygienists' Association
Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center
Hawai'i Nurses' Association OPEIU Local 50
Hawaii Public Health Association
Hui No Ke Ola Pono
Hui Ola Pono (UH Public Health's Student Organization)
Kaho'omiki; Hawaii Council of Physical Activity and Nutrition
Kauai Rural Health Association
Keiki Injury Prevention Coalition
Na Lei Wili Area Health Education Center, Inc.
The Queen's Health Systems
Tobacco Prevention Project, Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy
University of Hawaii Student Health Advisory Council
US COPD Coalition
Waimānalo Health Center

HEALTH & COMMUNITY LEADERS

Kathryn Akioka, RRT / TTS

Joy Barua

Forrest Batz, PharmD

Frank Baum, MD

Deborah Bond-Upson

Dale Carstensen

Valerie Chang

Dyson Chee

Danelle Cheng

Bridgitte Daniel

May Rose Dela Cruz, DrPH

Andrew Fox, MD

Shani Gacayan

Donita Garcia

Asaka Herman

Pedro Haro, MPH

Cyd Hoffeld

Colleen Inouye, MD

Lila Johnson

Leilani Kailiawa

Lehua Kaulukukui

Ken Kozuma

Mark Levin

Loren Lindborg

Katherine May, PsychD

Bryan Mih, MD

Kristin Mills

Shelly Ogata

Gregg Pacilio, PT

Matthew Prellberg

Jordan Ragasa

Nathalie Razo

Keenan Reader

Crystal Robello

Kimberly Golis-Robello

Mary Santa Maria

Anne Takata, DC

Patty Kahanamoku-Teruya

Chien-Wen Tseng, MD

John A Hau'oli Tomoso

Jennifer Valera

Cecilia Villafuerte

Linda Weiner, MD
Andre Weston, MDiv
Matthew Wong

YOUTH AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

After-School All-Stars Hawaii
American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO)
Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs
Bad Boys Football Club
Big Island Interscholastic Federation (BIIF)
Hale 'Ōpio Kaua'i Inc.
Hawaii Children's Action Network
Hawaii Interscholastic Athletic Directors Association
Hawaii State Commission on Fatherhood
Hawaii State Teachers Association (HSTA)
Hawaii State Youth Commission
Hawai'i Youth Climate Coalition
Hawaii Youth Services Network
Honolulu Youth Commission
Kanu o ka 'Āina Learning Ohana (KALO)
Kauai Path Inc.
LearningBond
Pacific American Foundation
Parents for Public Schools of Hawai'i
Partners in Development Foundation
Residential Youth Services & Empowerment (RYSE)
The Friends of Kamalani and Lydgate Park
Waipahu Intermediate Youth For Safety

BUSINESSES

Country Courier, LLC
Hana Lima Physical Therapy
Home Remedies Interior Design
JCS Enterprises Inc.
Pediatric Therapies Hawaii

OAHU NEIGHBORHOOD BOARDS

Kuliouou-Kalani Iki Neighborhood Board 02
Kaimuki Neighborhood Board 04
Diamond Head Neighborhood Board 05
Palolo Neighborhood Board 06
McCully-Moilili Neighborhood Board 08
Makiki-Tantalua Neighborhood Board 10
Ala Moana/Kakaako Neighborhood Board 11

Nuuanu/Punchbowl Neighborhood Board 12
Downtown-Chinatown Neighborhood Board 13
Liliha/Puunui/Alewa Neighborhood Board 14
Aliamanu-Salt Lake Neighborhood Board 18
Aiea Neighborhood Board 20
Pearl City Neighborhood Board 21
Waipahu Neighborhood Board 22
Ewa Neighborhood Board 23
Mililani-Waipio Neighborhood Board 25
North Shore Neighborhood Board 27
Koolauloa Neighborhood Board 28
Kahaluu Neighborhood Board 29
Kaneohe Neighborhood Board 30
Kailua Neighborhood Board 31
Waimanalo Neighborhood Board 32
Mililani Mauka- Launani Valley Neighborhood Board 35
Nanakuli-Mailii Neighborhood Board 36

SCHOOLS

Damien Memorial School
Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS)
Hawaii Council of Private Schools (HCPS)
Holy Family Catholic Academy
Island Pacific Academy
Maryknoll School
Maui Preparatory Academy
Mid-Pacific Institute
Roots School
St. Andrew's Schools
Saint Louis School



HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 11:15:56 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Landon Yamamoto	Bionic Petroleum	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Landon Yamamoto, and I am a business owner of 3 businesses in Hawaii. I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 756, which seeks to ban the sale of menthol and flavored vapor products. While I fully support initiatives to curb youth access to tobacco and vapor products, I believe this bill may inadvertently undermine public health efforts and community safety.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized the marketing of certain menthol-flavored e-cigarette products after extensive scientific review. These products have been found to meet the statutory public health standard, offering adult smokers a less harmful alternative to combustible cigarettes. By banning these FDA-authorized products, HB 756 could inadvertently push adult consumers back to more harmful traditional tobacco products, try by reversing public health gains.

Moreover, prohibiting the sale of menthol and flavored vapor products is unlikely to eliminate demand. Instead, it may drive consumers toward unregulated sources, fostering a black market devoid of age restrictions, safety standards, or oversight.

This scenario has been observed in other jurisdictions where flavor bans have been implemented, leading to unintended consequences such as increased youth access and the proliferation of unsafe products. As a responsible retailer committed to adhering to age verification laws, I am concerned that HB 756 would penalize compliant businesses while empowering illicit sellers who operate without accountability.

I urge lawmakers to consider more balanced and effective solutions that target youth prevention without adversely affecting adult consumers and responsible businesses. Strengthening enforcement of existing regulations, imposing stricter penalties for illegal sales, and enhancing public education on the risks of youth vaping are measures that could address the issue more effectively. HB 756, in its current form, may create more problems than it resolves. I respectfully request the committee to vote against this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 11:24:51 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Grace Sakanishi	China Town Liquor	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Opposition to HB756

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Committee,

As a local business owner in Hawai'i, I strongly oppose HB756 due to its devastating impact on small businesses, retail sales, and the local economy. This bill will drive customers away from licensed retailers and into the hands of unregulated sellers, significantly reducing legitimate sales and tax revenue. Small businesses like mine have already faced mounting challenges, and further restrictions will only push more local shops toward closure, leading to widespread economic hardship. Instead of supporting responsible businesses that follow the law, HB756 will force consumers to seek alternative, unregulated sources.

One of the most concerning consequences of HB756 is the inevitable rise in illegal sales and smuggling. When legal avenues for purchasing these products become too restrictive, consumers will turn to illicit markets that lack oversight and regulation. This not only puts public health at risk but also increases the burden on law enforcement to combat smuggling operations. We have already seen a rise in unregulated products flooding the market, and this bill will only accelerate that trend, making it more difficult to ensure the safety of the products being consumed.

Furthermore, HB756 threatens local jobs and livelihoods. Many hardworking employees in the retail sector rely on businesses like mine to support their families. If this bill passes, business closures and reduced sales will lead to layoffs, harming both workers and the broader economy. Hawai'i cannot afford to lose more jobs, especially when there are better ways to regulate the industry without eliminating legitimate businesses. I urge you to oppose HB756 and consider solutions that balance public health, business sustainability, and economic stability. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Thank you for your time,

Grace Sakanashi

Owner, Chinatown Liquor

February 20, 2025

TO: Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

FROM: Cigar Association of America, Inc.
(William Goo)

RE: **HB 756, HD2** - Relating to Health
Hearing Date: February 21, 2025
Time: 2:00 p.m.

The Cigar Association of America, Inc. ("CAA") **opposes HB 756, HD2**. Attached is CAA's testimony in opposition.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.



February 19, 2025

House Finance Committee
Testimony in Opposition to HB756

Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and members of the House Finance Committee,

The Cigar Association of America (CAA) submits the following testimony in opposition to House Bill 756 (the Proposed Flavor Ban). CAA is the leading national trade organization representing the interests of cigar manufacturers, importers, distributors, and major suppliers in the cigar and pipe tobacco industry, and therefore is, a key stakeholder in any discussion on the regulation of these products, as any changes in laws significantly impact its members and their ability to conduct business.

HB756 seeks the same sweeping action of banning flavors and removing adult consumers' ability to choose across nearly all categories of tobacco products – but such draconian measures are simply not justified for cigars or pipe tobacco, as there is no epidemic of underage use or access to these products. In fact, youth usage of cigars, including flavored cigars, is at an all-time low both in Hawaii and nationwide. In Hawaii, the most recent survey data available (2019) shows that high school usage of any cigar type was 2.8%. While updated data is not available for Hawaii, nationwide there have been steep and steady declines in youth usage of cigars since 2019. The National Youth Tobacco Survey tells us that in 2022, youth usage of cigars was at 1.9%, in 2023 it dropped to 1.6%, and in 2024 it further dropped to 1.2%. For comparison, 20.4% of Hawaii youth currently use alcohol and 17.2% currently use marijuana.

While a ban on flavored cigars and pipe tobacco will have little impact on youth public health, it will be significant for Hawaii businesses and tax revenue collected by the State of Hawaii. CAA estimates that flavored cigars represent up to 47% of the adult cigar market and nearly all pipe tobacco can be considered flavored simply based on the process that is used to manufacture the product. In fiscal year 2021- 2022, Hawaii cigar excise tax revenues were more than \$1 million. Should these products be prohibited almost half of this revenue would be lost, as well as the additional loss of sales tax revenue collected on the sale of these products.

Data from the Tax Foundation, which tracks illicit tobacco sales, has shown that a flavor ban does not actually change behavior; it just changes where consumers purchase their products. This leads to increased pressure on law enforcement to identify illicit sales in the community and strains community relations. Comments from numerous law enforcement representatives and community activists in opposition to the FDA's proposed federal flavor ban spoke to this detrimental and unavoidable consequence.

Localities that have experimented with a flavor ban have also found that flavor bans can increase youth cigarette smoking rates. A study done after a flavor ban was instituted in San Francisco, CA found stated:

1310 G St. NW, Suite 680 Washington, DC 20005 (202) 223-8204

CAATeam@cigarassociation.org CigarAssociation.org @CigarAssoc



"Difference-in-differences analyses found that San Francisco's flavor ban was associated with more than doubled odds of recent smoking among underage high school students relative to concurrent changes in other districts (adjusted odds ratio, 2.24 [95% CI, 1.42-3.53]; P = .001."

Put simply, there is no legal, factual, or scientific basis to prohibit the sale of flavored cigars and pipe tobacco, and doing so would be detrimental to Hawaii businesses and deprive adult cigar consumers of their right to a legal product. Surveys conducted or funded by government agencies all show that youth usage of cigars, including flavored cigars, is at historic lows, and youth usage of pipe tobacco is nearly unmeasurable.

On October 17th, 2024 the Centers for Disease Control announced that use of tobacco by adolescents has reached a 25 year low. This public health victory was achieved while successfully maintaining legal sales of tobacco products to adults. Imposing a prohibition on the legal sale of these products that will drive adult consumers to purchase them through an untaxed and uncontrolled black-market is a flawed approach.

It is noteworthy that the FDA's proposed federal flavor ban on cigars was initiated by the first Trump Administration in 2018 with bipartisan support. However, it was suspended by President Biden's Administration after reviewing public comments on community impact. The incoming (second) Trump Administration has now agreed with the Biden decision and withdrawn the proposed rule completely. This is a truly rare instance of two Presidents from opposing political parties, withdrawing support for a rulemaking that they both initially supported.

CAA respectfully urges the committee to consider the staggering unintended consequences of this legislation. It would harm law-abiding adults, devastate small businesses, and drastically reduce tax revenue for the state with no tangible impact on reducing youth usage, which is already close to immeasurable, and create a black market. This proposal is a solution in search of a problem with little to no data supporting that it will change usage patterns in any meaningful way.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Pearce
President, Cigar Association of America, Inc.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 11:42:48 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Travis Yoshinaga	Marukin Market	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Opposition to HB756

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Travis Yoshinaga, and I am the owner of Marukin Market. I am here today to strongly oppose this bill, not just as a business owner, but as someone who witnesses firsthand the negative impact of the black market on our islands every day.

Hawai‘i is already struggling with illegal activities, including game rooms, monster homes, crystal meth, ghost guns, and fireworks—all of which continue to flood into our state despite existing laws. People are growing frustrated with rising crime and homelessness, and now, this bill threatens to add yet another problem.

Prohibiting menthol cigarettes and flavored vapes will not eliminate demand—it will simply drive consumers to the black market. Criminals will exploit this ban, just as they do in other states. In California, for example, vans from out of state now supply menthol cigarettes and vapes to eager customers, selling them at inflated prices while avoiding taxes. Meanwhile, legitimate businesses like mine, which follow the law, pay rent, and contribute tax revenue, will be forced to close, leading to job losses and economic decline.

The reality is that people always find a way. Already, menthol alternatives exist—Amazon sells flavored balls that can be inserted into filters, and menthol drops can be added to cigarettes. These workarounds show that prohibition does not stop access, it only shifts it underground. And unlike licensed retailers, black market sellers do not check IDs, increasing the risk of youth access.

Law enforcement agencies are already stretched thin. The ATF is overwhelmed, and even our local police struggle to respond to urgent incidents. In my own store, when a man pulled out a large knife while a senior customer was present, it took 10 to 15 minutes for officers to arrive after I activated the silent alarm. If this bill passes, criminals will be waiting outside our businesses, selling illegal products tax-free while we fight to survive.

Supporters of this bill may point to declining cigarette and vape sales in California as a success, but those numbers fail to account for the explosion of illicit activity. If this bill passes, Hawai'i will face the same fate—business closures, lost tax revenue, and a surge in unregulated sales.

I urge you to reconsider the unintended consequences of this legislation. While the goal may be public health, the reality is that this bill will do more harm than good. Let's not create another black market crisis that law enforcement cannot control.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Travis Yoshinaga

Marukin Market



**TESTIMONY OF TINA YAMAKI, PRESIDENT OF THE RETAIL MERCHANTS OF HAWAII
FEBRUARY 21, 2025
HB 756 HD2 RELATING TO HEALTH**

Aloha, Chair Yamashita and members of the House Committee on Finance. I am Tina Yamaki, President of the Retail Merchants of Hawaii.

The Retail Merchants of Hawaii was founded in 1901, RMH is a statewide, not for profit trade organization committed to the growth and development of the retail industry in Hawaii. Our membership includes small mom & pop stores, large box stores, resellers, luxury retail, department stores, shopping malls, local, national, and international retailers, chains, and everyone in between.

We Strongly Oppose HB 756 HD2 Relating to Health. This measure prohibits the sale of flavored nicotine products and nicotine product flavor enhancers and the mislabeling of e-liquids as nicotine free; establishes penalties for violations; authorizes the Department of Health to appoint, commission, or contract for services of inspectors; establishes positions; appropriates funds; and is effective 7/1/3000.

This measure has economic consequences for the state. Hawaii's tobacco sales generated over **\$82 million in tax revenue** in 2024, a significant contribution to the state's economy. This represents a **\$1 million decline** from 2023, indicating that individuals are quitting smoking and vaping or reducing their usage. Additionally, the state's vaping tax, enacted just a few years ago, has already contributed over **\$6.7 million in revenue**. Eliminating flavored nicotine products would further shrink this revenue stream, impacting state-funded programs such as community health centers, cancer research, and emergency medical services initiatives to name a few. We also wonder what state funded programs will be downsized or cut if this tax revenue is lost? How is the state going to make up for the shortfall and how much will it cost businesses?

Furthermore, local businesses across the State that sell tobacco and vape products would suffer significant losses. National data shows that flavored e-cigarettes account for nearly **85% of all vape product sales**, meaning a **ban would cripple this industry, leading to potential store closures and job losses for hundreds of workers**.

Flavored nicotine products are not just used by young people but also by millions of adult smokers seeking to quit traditional cigarettes. According to a 2020 study published in JAMA Network Open, more than **60% of adult vapers use fruit or sweet flavors** rather than tobacco flavors, as they find these flavors more effective in helping them stay away from cigarettes.

Public health organizations such as Public Health England have stated that vaping is at least 95% less harmful than smoking, reinforcing the importance of flavored products as a harm-reduction alternative. If flavors are banned, many former smokers could return to smoking combustible tobacco, negating years of public health progress.

A ban on flavored nicotine products does not eliminate demand but rather pushes consumers to the black market, where products are unregulated and potentially hazardous. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that black-market THC vape products were responsible for more than 2,800 lung injury cases and 68 deaths nationwide in 2019 alone. By prohibiting legally regulated products, Hawaii risks fueling an illicit market with unsafe alternatives. Furthermore, people who have contacts in the military would also be able to get flavored tobacco and vape products from military outlets – tax free.

Additionally, banning flavored products could drive more consumers back to combustible cigarettes. Studies have shown that adult smokers are more likely to quit if they switch to flavored vapor products, making them a valuable harm-reduction tool.

We also want to make it clear that retailers are NOT the ones selling vaping devices and products to those who are under 21 years of age. Retailers often go as far as not selling to the adult that accompanies the minor into the store if it is revealed that the device or product that they are seeking to purchase is for the minor. Retailers have no control over their products once they are sold and the customer walks out the door with them. It is often the case that **an adult family member or friend purchases vape devices or tobacco products for the minors and gives it to the minor away from the retail store.** Many of minors are obtaining their cigarettes and vaping devices from their parents or older friends or purchasing them on the illegal black market. We have seen a significant spike in theft and tobacco and vape products are a favorite to be stolen. Those selling stolen goods do not care to see how old someone is nor is any tax collected on the sale.

Instead of enacting an outright ban, **Hawaii should focus on strengthening enforcement of existing laws to prevent youth access to include consequences aimed at the minors who are vaping and those who purchase the products for the minors.** Make law breakers accountable for their actions. Adults who can legally purchase these items should not be denied access if the aim is at minors.

According to the 2023 National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS), **youth vaping rates have declined significantly over the past three years due to stronger age restrictions, enforcement, and public education campaigns.** In fact, the percentage of high school students who currently vape dropped from 27.5% in 2019 to 10% in 2023. This shows that regulation - not prohibiting - is working.

Rather than penalizing law-abiding adults and businesses, the state should direct resources toward better enforcement of age restrictions, stricter penalties for those friends and family who provide minors with tobacco and vape products, and consumer education.

This measure would devastate Hawaii's small businesses, reduce critical tax revenue, push consumers toward unregulated markets, and remove a key harm-reduction tool for adult smokers. A more effective approach would be to enforce current laws, educate the public, and ensure responsible access to regulated nicotine products.

Mahalo again for this opportunity to testify.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 12:02:46 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Jordan	Discount Smoke Shop Hawaii	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Testimony in Opposition to HB 756

Submitted by: Michelle Jordan

Representative, Discount Smoke Shop Hawaii

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Discount Smoke Shop Hawaii in strong opposition to HB 756, which seeks to ban flavored tobacco and vapor products. This bill represents a dangerous overreach that would infringe upon the rights of responsible adult consumers, eliminate access to federally regulated reduced-harm alternatives, and create unintended public health and economic consequences.

Protecting Consumer Rights and Federally Legal Products

HB 756 strips adult consumers of their right to purchase and use federally legal products. Many of the vapor products currently available on the market have undergone extensive review by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) through its Premarket Tobacco Product Application (PMTA) process, ensuring their compliance with federal health and safety regulations. The FDA has authorized a number of these products as appropriate for the protection of public health, recognizing their role in harm reduction for adult smokers.

By banning these products at the state level, Hawaii would be undermining federal regulatory authority and preventing adult consumers from accessing less harmful alternatives that have been

rigorously evaluated. This sets a dangerous precedent where state policies disregard federally approved public health tools designed to help smokers transition away from combustible cigarettes.

Public Health Consequences of Eliminating Reduced-Harm Alternatives

Decades of research confirm that combustible cigarettes are the leading cause of smoking-related diseases and death. Flavored vapor products, particularly those authorized by the FDA, offer adult smokers an alternative that significantly reduces their exposure to harmful chemicals found in traditional cigarettes. Countries like the United Kingdom and New Zealand have successfully integrated vaping into their smoking cessation programs, contributing to significant declines in smoking rates.

Prohibiting flavored vapor products will force many adult smokers back to traditional cigarettes, completely undermining public health efforts to reduce smoking-related illnesses. Instead of protecting public health, HB 756 will discourage harm reduction and limit access to products that have been shown to help adult smokers quit.

Encouraging an Unregulated, Untaxed, and Irresponsible Black Market

History has shown that prohibition does not eliminate demand, it simply pushes consumers toward illicit markets. If flavored tobacco and vapor products are banned, adult consumers will seek them elsewhere, whether from online vendors, unregulated sources, or even homemade solutions that lack any oversight. This black market will operate without safety regulations, quality control, or age verification measures, increasing risks for both youth and adult consumers.

Furthermore, banning these products would eliminate legitimate tax revenue for the state, shifting economic benefits to illegal sellers who do not contribute to Hawaii's economy or abide by responsible business practices. This would have serious fiscal consequences, reducing funds that could otherwise be allocated toward education, healthcare, and other essential programs.

Conclusion

HB 756 is a misguided policy that violates consumer rights, disregards federally approved harm reduction strategies, and endangers public health by eliminating access to reduced-risk alternatives. It will fuel an unregulated black market, resulting in negative economic and public safety consequences.

We can all agree our Keiki of Hawaii need to be protected by these fake actors and it starts with stricter marketing practices that don't appeal to unintended audiences. Criminal penalties for those who are supplying minors with vapor products need to be held criminally accountable.

I urge the committee to reject HB 756 and instead consider evidence-based regulations that prioritize harm reduction, consumer choice, and responsible business practices.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Michelle Jordan

Representative, Discount Smoke Shop Hawaii

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 12:17:19 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Richard Lee	KCL Aloha Pacific Inc.	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my opposition to HB 756, a proposed bill that has garnered much attention and concern from small business owners and community members alike.

As an advocate for small businesses and the local community, I am deeply concerned about the potential negative impacts HB 756 could have if passed. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, providing jobs, services, and a personal touch that larger corporations often lack. The passing of HB 756 could impose new regulations and financial burdens that many small businesses might find difficult to shoulder.

One of the major concerns is the potential increase in operating costs due to additional compliance measures. Many small business owners operate on tight margins, and any increase in expenses could jeopardize their ability to continue providing services, leading to reduced economic activity and potential closures. This would not only affect the business owners but also their employees and customers who rely on these services.

Furthermore, the ripple effect of these challenges could extend to the surrounding community. Small businesses contribute significantly to the local economy by creating jobs and attracting foot traffic to neighborhoods, which benefits other local enterprises. By threatening the viability of these businesses, HB 756 could inadvertently lead to decreased economic diversity and vibrancy in our community.

I urge you to consider the potential adverse effects on small businesses and the community when deliberating on this bill. I am confident that, with careful consideration and dialogue, we can find a balanced approach that supports both regulatory goals and the sustainability of small businesses.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my perspective. I am hopeful for a favorable outcome that supports the prosperity of our local businesses and community.

Sincerely,

Richard Lee

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 1:03:29 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hee Nam Hwang	No. 1 Store	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello my name is Hee Nam Hwang,

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony.

I oppose HB 380

I am a local business owner in Honolulu.

I have owned my store for 20 years.

I may not speak good English but I am very responsible owner.

This bill would be harmful for store owners like me.

The state would lose a lot of tax dollars, and would cost the state even more money having to manage a ramped illegal black market and all the unintended consequences it comes with.

It doesn't solve the youth vaping, it simply pushes it into the unregulated, irresponsible and untaxed black market... similar to what we see with the firework problem our state has failed to enforce. Retailers are held to high standards and are held accountable to ensuring responsible retailing.

What needs to happen is stricter criminal penalties for violators giving access to vapor products to minors. Retailers are probably the most responsible parties in the industry, it's parents, siblings, and adults giving these products to minors. Hold them accountable criminally.

Thank you for your consideration,

Hee Nam Hwang

No. 1 Store

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 1:11:28 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meiyun He	S&K Wholesale	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Meiyun He, and I am a local business owner operating a tobacco wholesale business in Hawai'i. I strongly oppose HB 756 due to its devastating impact on local businesses like mine. The proposed ban on menthol and flavored tobacco products would wipe out nearly 70% of my sales, threatening not only my business but also the many local retailers that depend on these products to stay afloat. This bill would hurt responsible, taxpaying businesses while doing little to address the real issues of youth access and illegal sales.

Beyond the economic consequences, HB 756 undermines public health efforts by eliminating FDA-authorized vapor products that have been scientifically reviewed and shown to help adult smokers transition away from combustible cigarettes. By removing regulated alternatives, this bill could unintentionally push more consumers back to traditional smoking, reversing progress in tobacco harm reduction. Public health policies should be based on harm reduction strategies, not broad bans that limit consumer choice and discourage smoking cessation efforts.

Additionally, prohibition has historically fueled illicit markets, and this bill is no exception. If menthol and flavored products are banned, demand will not disappear it will simply shift to illegal sources, making it easier for youth to obtain unregulated products through the black market. Instead of restricting legal businesses that comply with regulations, the state should focus on enforcing existing laws to prevent underage access. I urge you to oppose HB 756 and consider more effective approaches to regulation that protect both public health and local businesses. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Meiyun He

S&K Wholesale

**Testimony before the Hawaii House Committee on Finance
Regarding Banning Flavored Tobacco and Vapor Products
Lindsey Stroud, Senior Fellow
Taxpayers Protection Alliance
February 21, 2025**

Chairman Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance:

Thank you for your time today to discuss banning the sale of flavored tobacco and nicotine products in the Aloha State. My name is Lindsey Stroud and I'm a Senior Fellow at the Taxpayers Protection Alliance (TPA). TPA is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to educating the public through the research, analysis and dissemination of information on the government's effects on the economy.

While efforts to reduce youth use of age-restricted products is laudable, flawed policies including banning flavors in tobacco and vapor products ignores record lows in youth tobacco use and recent (and continued declines) in youth vapor use. Moreover, it unfairly punishes adults who rely on e-cigarettes to both quit smoking and remain smoke-free.

Key Points:

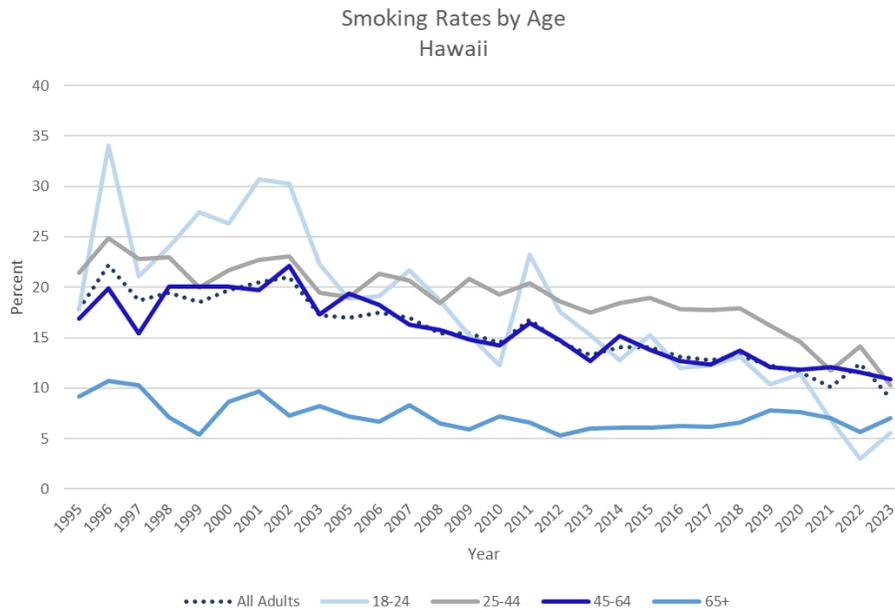
- Adult smoking rates are at record lows in Hawaii, with only 9 percent of Hawaiians aged 18 years or older smoking in 2023. This was a 47.7 percent decline from 2003, when 17.2 percent of adults were smoking.
- Only 5.6 percent of Hawaiian adults aged 18 to 24 years old were smoking in 2023.
- In Hawaii, lower-income and less-educated adults were more likely to smoke than adults with high income and college degrees.
- Adults earning \$25,000 or less were three times more likely to smoke than adults earning \$50,000 or more. Adults lacking a high school diploma or equivalent were 3.8 times more like to smoke than college graduates.
- Adult e-cigarette use has and continues to increase.
- In 2023, 10.1 percent of adults were currently using e-cigarettes, which was a 14.8 percent increase from 2022, and 134.9 percent increase from 2016.
- In 2023, there were 12.5 times more adults vaping than smoking.
- The introduction of e-cigarettes correlates with decreases in adult smoking rates in Hawaii. Between 2016 and 2023, the percentage of Hawaiian adults who were smoking decreased by 31.3 percent.

- Adults earning \$25,000 or less were 1.7 times more likely to vape than adults earning \$50,000 or more. Adults lacking a high school diploma or equivalent were 3.1 times more like to smoke than college graduates.
- Youth use of combustible cigarettes is at record lows. In 2023, only 12.1 percent of Hawaiian high school students had ever tried a combustible cigarette, while 3 percent reported past-month use. The same year, only 6.3 percent of Hawaii middle school students had tried a cigarette, and 2.4 percent reported past-month use.
- Between 2019 and 2023, past-month use of e-cigarettes decreased among high school students by 56.9 percent, while daily use decreased by 41.8 percent.
- Among middle school students, during the same period, past-month use of e-cigarettes decreased by 65.7 percent, while frequent use of e-cigarettes decreased by 73.3 percent.
- Flavors are not primary reason why youth use e-cigarettes.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the most common reasons youth vape was because of feelings of anxiety, depression, and/or stress.
- In 2023, among Hawaiian high school students who had ever tried an e-cigarette, 25.2 percent cited feeling anxious, stressed or depressed as a reason for use, compared to only 3.6 percent of students who reported using them for flavors.
- Flavored e-cigarettes and tobacco harm reduction products are useful to adults who smoke. A 2018 survey of nearly 70,000 adult vapers found that the majority of respondents were vaping fruit and dessert flavors.
- A 2020 found that adults using flavored e-cigarettes were more likely to quit smoking than those who vaped tobacco flavors.
- Smoking-related cancers have declined among Hawaiians.
- Between 2018 and 2021, the incidence rate of Lung and Bronchus cancer cases dropped by 9.2 percent, while between 2018 and 2022, the incidence rate of Lung and Bronchus cancer deaths declined by 13.5 percent.
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued marketing orders for menthol-flavored e-cigarettes, and a variety of oral nicotine products in flavors ranging from coffee to citrus and spearmint.
- The FDA and CDC recognize the potential of tobacco harm reduction, with the CDC noting that e-cigarettes are less harmful than combustible cigarettes.
- Hawaii should invest more existing tobacco monies on tobacco control programs. In 2023, for every \$1 the state received in cigarette taxes and settlement payments, it allocated only \$0.06 on tobacco control programs

Cigarette Use Among Hawaiian Adults

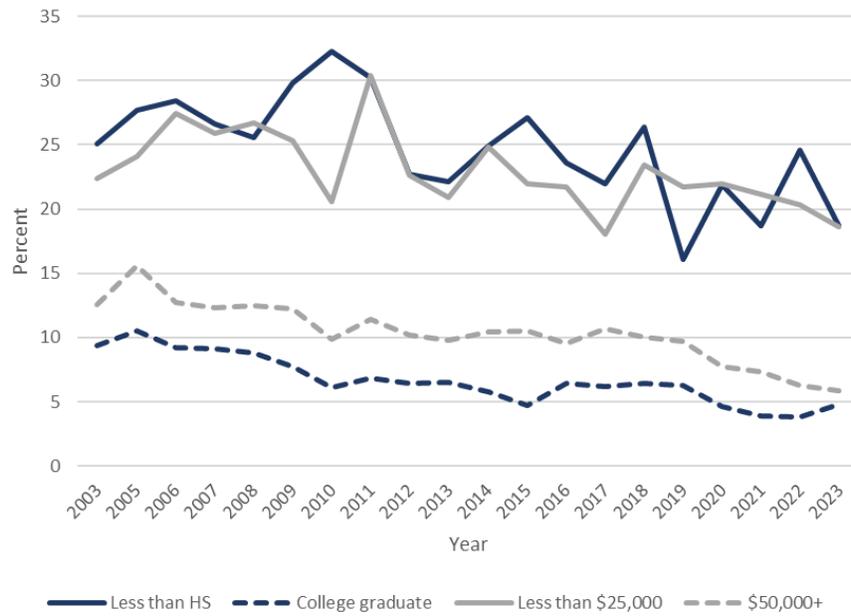
Similar to other states and nationwide survey data, the percentage of adults who smoke combustible cigarettes are at record lows in the Aloha State. In 2023, according to data from the CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (CDC BRFSS) survey, 9 percent of adults aged 18 years or older were currently smoking, while 5.7 percent of adults reported daily smoking rates.¹ Between 2003 and 2023, smoking rates among Hawaii adults decreased by 47.7 percent, from 17.2 percent of adults smoking in 2003, to less than one in ten in 2023.

Among young adults aged 18 to 24 years old, smoking rates are at some of their lowest levels recorded. In 2023, only 5.6 percent of Hawaii young adults were currently smoking. This is a whopping 74.9 percent decline from 2003, when more than one-fifth (22.3 percent) reported current combustible cigarette use.



In Hawaii, lower-income and less-educated adults were more likely to smoke than adults with high income and college degrees. In 2023, 18.7 percent of adults who had earned less than \$25,000 a year reported current cigarette use, compared to only 5.9 percent of adults who reported incomes of \$50,000 or more. Among adults who did not graduate high school or obtain a G.E.D., 18.7 percent reported current cigarette used compared to only 4.8 percent of college graduates. Smoking rates have declined at greater rates among higher-income and more-educated adults. Between 2003 and 2023, smoking rates among Hawaii adults earning less than \$25,000 a year declined by only 16.6 percent, compared to a 53.4 percent decrease among adults earning \$50,000 or more. Among adults with less than a high school diploma, smoking rates decreased by 25.5 percent between 2003 and 2023, compared to 48.9 percent reduction among college graduates.

Adult Smoking Rates by Education and Income
Hawaii



While adult cigarette use continues to decline in the Aloha State, use of e-cigarettes has increased since 2016. In 2023, 10.1 percent of Hawaii adults aged 18 years or older were currently using vapor products, which was a 14.8 percent increase from 2022, but a significant 134.9 percent increase from 2016 (the first year with national CDC BRFSS data on e-cigarette use), when 4.3 percent of Hawaii adults reported using e-cigarettes.

The introduction of e-cigarettes in Hawaii correlates with reduced rates in smoking among all adults, but especially among young adults. Between 2016 and 2023, vaping rates increased by 134.9 percent among all adults, while smoking rates decreased by 31.3 percent. Among young adults aged 18 to 24 years old, vaping rates increased by 129.6 percent, while smoking rates dropped by 53.3 percent.

Similar to smoking rates, lower income and less educated adults were more likely to vape in Hawaii. In 2023, 12.9 percent of adults who earned incomes of \$25,000 or less per year were current e-cigarette users, compared to only 7.8 percent of adults earning \$50,000 or more. Among adults who did not earn a high school diploma or G.E.D., 14 percent were currently vaping compared to 4.5 percent of college graduates.

With record lows in adult combustible cigarette use, correlating with increases in e-cigarette use, policymakers must recognize the efficacy in tobacco harm reduction products such as vapor products in reducing smoking rates among Hawaii adults.

Youth Cigarette and E-Cigarette Use

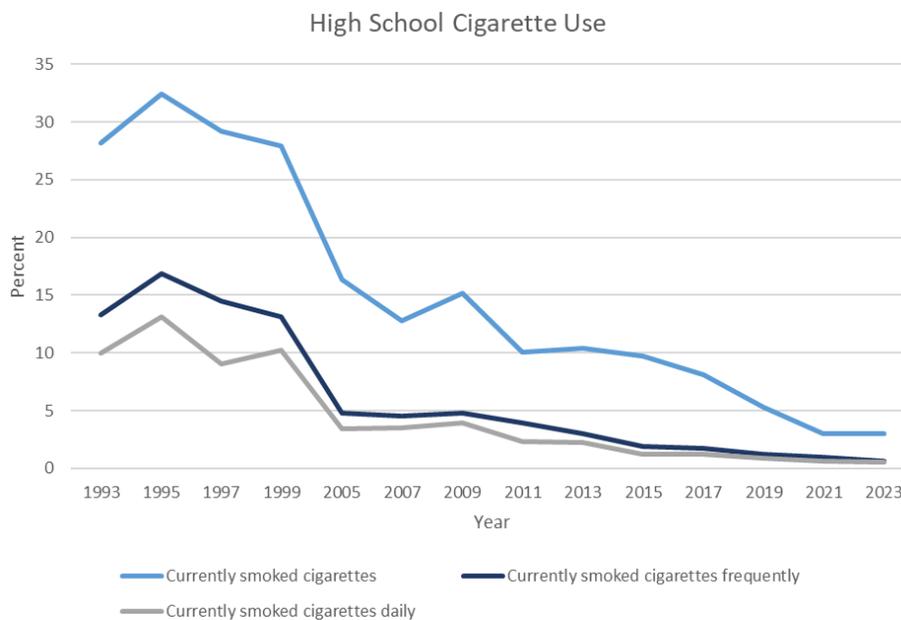
Youth use of cigarettes is at record lows in the Aloha State, while youth use of vapor products has significantly declined since peaking in 2019.

According to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, among Hawaii high school students, in 2023:

- 12.1 percent had ever tried a combustible cigarette
- 3 percent reported past-month cigarette use
- 0.6 percent were currently smoking cigarettes frequently (20 or mor days)
- 0.5 percent were currently smoking cigarettes daily

Between 1993 and 2023, among high school students:

- Frequent use of cigarettes decreased by 95.5 percent
- Daily use of cigarettes declined by 95 percent
- Past-month use of cigarettes declined by 89.4 percent
- Ever-use of cigarettes decreased by 81.5 percent



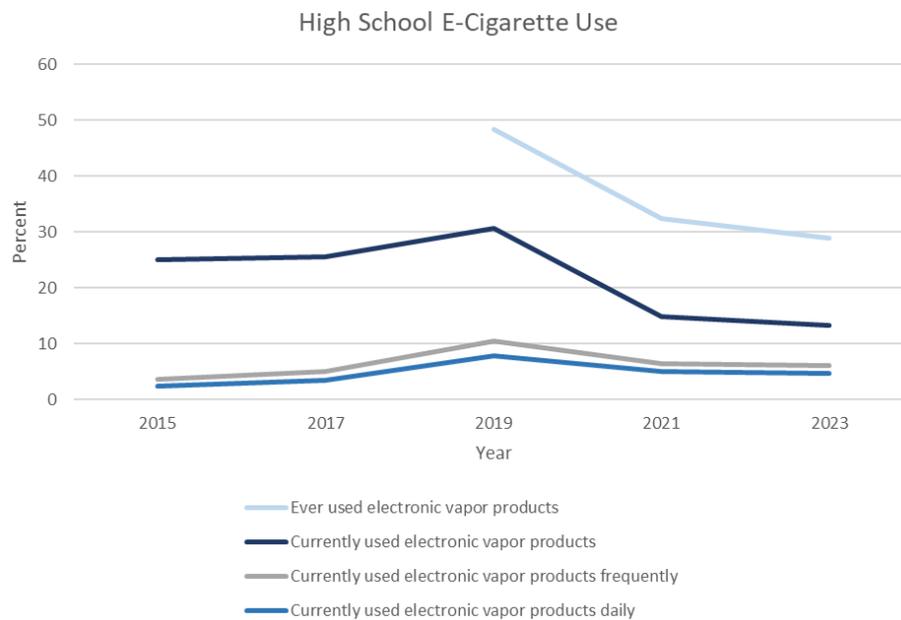
Among Hawaii high school students, in 2023:

- 28.8 percent had ever tried an e-cigarette
- 13.2 percent were currently using e-cigarettes
- 6 percent reported frequent e-cigarette use

- 4.6 percent reported using e-cigarettes daily

Between 2019 and 2023, among high school students:

- Current use of e-cigarettes decreased by 56.9 percent
- Frequent use of e-cigarettes declined by 42.3 percent
- Daily use of e-cigarettes was down by 41.8 percent
- Ever-use of e-cigarettes decreased by 40.4 percent

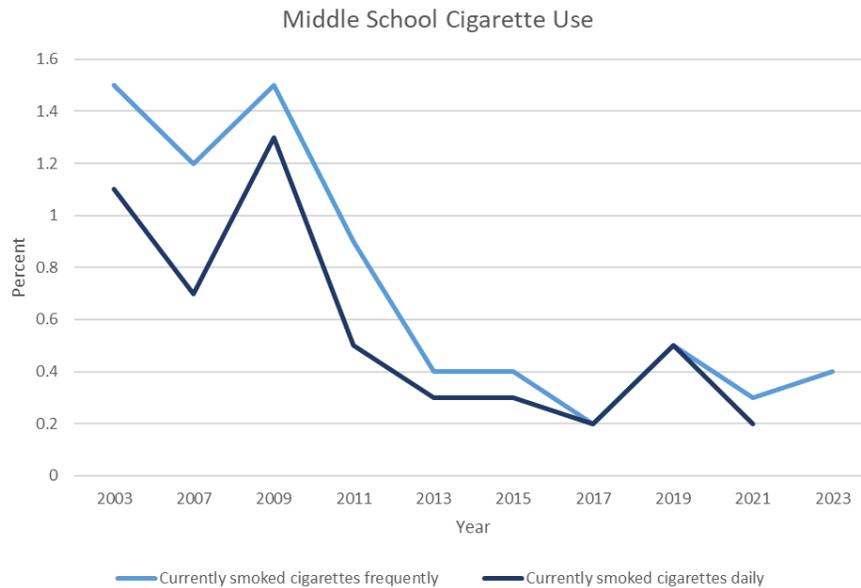


Among Hawaii middle school students, in 2023:

- 6.3 percent had ever tried a combustible cigarette
- 2.4 percent reported past-month cigarette use
- 0.4 percent were currently smoking cigarettes frequently (20 or mor days)

Between 2003 and 2023, among middle school students:

- Ever-use of cigarettes decreased by 74.9 percent
- Frequent use of cigarettes decreased by 73.3 percent
- Past-month use of cigarettes declined by 65.7 percent

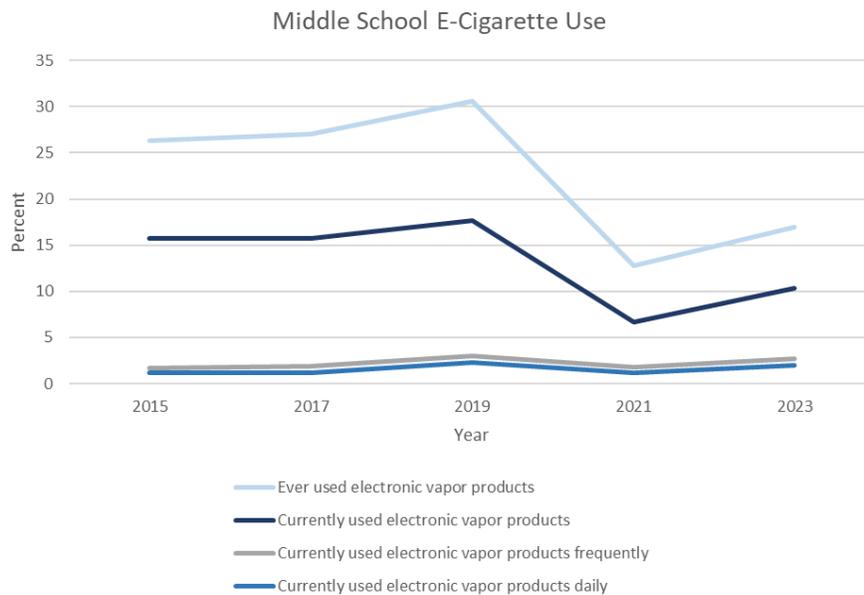


Among Hawaii middle school students, in 2023:

- 16.9 percent had ever tried an e-cigarette
- 10.3 percent were currently using e-cigarettes
- 2.7 percent reported frequent e-cigarette use
- 2 percent reported using e-cigarettes daily

Between 2019 and 2023, among high school students:

- Ever-use of e-cigarettes decreased by 44.8 percent
- Current use of e-cigarettes decreased by 41.8 percent
- Daily use of e-cigarettes was down by 13 percent
- Frequent use of e-cigarettes declined by 10 percent



With record lows in youth combustible cigarette use, flavor bans are not necessary to reduce youth use and unfairly punish adult consumers.

Oral Nicotine Pouch Use Remains Low

Since 2021, the CDC’s National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) has examined trends in nicotine pouch use – separate from other oral categories, including smokeless tobacco. In 2024, only 1.8 percent of U.S. middle and high school students were currently using nicotine pouches – which was only up from 1.5 percent in 2023 – despite an influx of sales and alarmist public health campaigns.

And while it is true in the legislation presented that youth use of nicotine pouches has more than doubled since 2021 – it is not the same as the number of youths using e-cigarettes in 2019, which was one in five, or 20 percent. In fact, less than one in 20 American youth were currently using nicotine pouches in 2024.

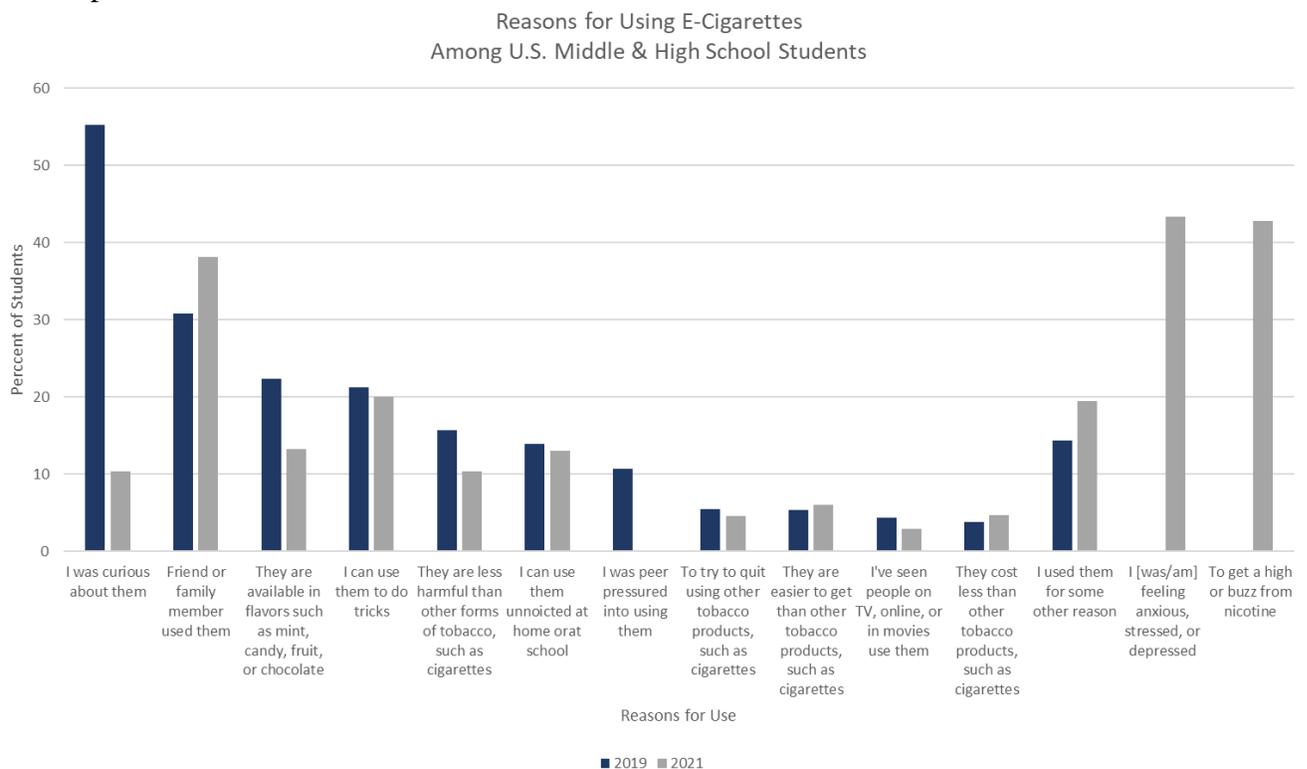
Flavors Are Not Main Driver of Youth E-Cigarette Use; Useful for Adults Who Smoke

According to the legislation, “youth vape because they come in appealing, kid-friendly flavors.” This is false and disregards statements from the CDC, as well as state and national surveys indicating flavors are not the main reason for e-cigarette use.

According to the CDC’s webpage titled “Health Effects of Vaping,” the “most common reason middle and high school students give for currently using e-cigarettes is, ‘I am feeling anxious, stressed, or depressed.’”²

In 2021, among U.S. middle and high school students who were currently using e-cigarettes, the NYTS found:³

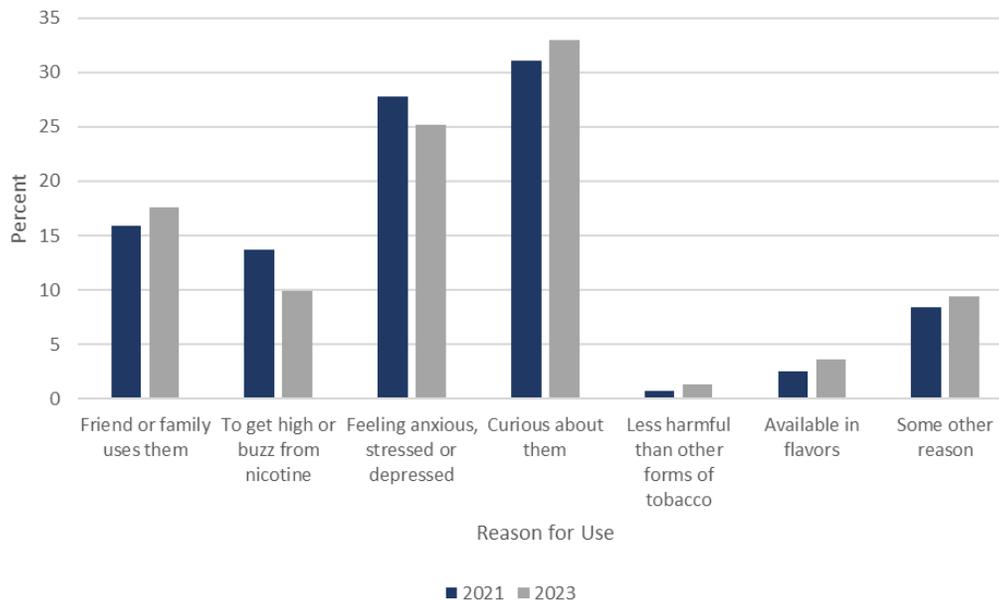
- 43.5 percent reported using them to get a high and/or buzz
- 43.2 percent had used them because they were feeling anxious, stressed and/or depressed
- 27.6 percent reported using them because a friend and/or family member had used them
- 19 percent reported “other”
- 13.2 percent reported using them because of flavors
- 10.3 percent reported using them because they were less harmful than other tobacco products



Survey data from Hawaii, and other states, show similar data.

In 2023, among Hawaii high school students who had ever used an e-cigarette, the most cited reason was “feeling anxious, stressed or depressed,” as reported by 25.2 percent of students.⁴ Comparatively, only 3.6 percent of students had used an e-cigarette because they were available in flavors.

Reasons for Using E-Cigarettes
Among Hawaii High School Students



In 2017, among Hawaiian high school students that had ever used e-cigarettes, only 26.4 percent cited flavors as a reason for e-cigarette use, compared to 38.9 percent that reported “other.”⁵

According to the 2023 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), among high school students who had ever tried an e-cigarette, 26.4 percent reported using them because of feelings of anxiety, depression, and/or stress, compared to only 2.1 percent of students who had used them because of flavors.⁶

According to Rhode Island’s YRBS, in 2023, among high school students who had ever-vaped, 32.9 percent had used them because they were curious about them, 20.4 percent cited anxiety, depression, and/or stress, and only 4 percent had used them because of flavors.⁷

According to Vermont’s 2023 YRBS, among high school students who were currently using e-cigarettes, 25 percent reported using them because they were feeling anxious, depressed, and/or stressed, compared to only 2 percent of students who had used them because of flavors.⁸ Among middle schoolers, 29 percent reported using them because they were curious about them, 22 percent cited feelings of anxiety, depression, and/or stress, and only 2 percent had used them because they were available in flavors.

And while banning flavors will have very limited impact on youth use, they will harm adults, because flavors provide a unique benefit, and are, in fact, already used in traditional tobacco cessation products including gums. And numerous surveys and studies of adults using e-cigarettes find flavors play an essential role in tobacco harm reduction.

A 2018 survey of nearly 70,000 American adult vapers “found flavors play a vital role in the use of electronic cigarettes and vaping devices.”⁹ In fact, 83.2 percent and 72.3 percent of survey respondents reported vaping fruit and dessert flavors, respectively. Most respondents indicated restricting flavors would make vaping “less enjoyable.”

Analysis of EcigIntelligence’s 2019 user survey found that fruits, sweets and candy, and desserts and bakery flavors “are among the most preferred flavors across all age groups.”¹⁰ Use of tobacco flavor was preferred by less than 5 percent of those who vape. If legal sales were restricted to tobacco flavor only, 69 percent of respondents said they would try to acquire their flavors from alternative methods and 25 percent stated that they would be willing to drive over 100 miles to obtain supply. This illustrates that flavors are important to the appeal of vaping over smoking and that proposals to ban flavored vaping products are more an attempt at prohibition by stealth than a serious public health measure.

A 2020 study found an association between flavors and smoking cessation. In a cohort study of more than 17,900 participants, the authors found that “adults who began vaping nontobacco-flavored e-cigarettes were more likely to quit smoking than those who vaped tobacco flavors.”¹¹

Smoking-Related Cancers are Declining in Hawaii

The legislation is intended to address smoking-related health care costs, but as the rates of smoking continue to decline, smoking-related health issues, including cancers, are already declining.

For example, according to the CDC (in 2021), the rate of “Lung and Bronchus cancer was 37.1 per 100,000 people.”¹² There were 791 new Lung and Bronchus cancer cases reported among Hawaiians. The Hawaiian incidence rate of new Lung and Bronchus cancer diagnoses was 27.6 percent lower than the national average of 49 cases per 100,000 persons. More notably, this was a decrease from 2018 when there were 40.9 cases of Lung and Bronchus per 100,000 Hawaiians, and 809 new cancer cases were reported.¹³ Between 2018 and 2021, the incidence rate of Lung and Bronchus cases per 100,000 Hawaiians declined by 9.2 percent, while there 18 fewer new Lung and Bronchus cancer cases in 2021, compared to 2018.

Deaths attributed to Lung and Bronchus cancers are also down. In 2022, “the Lung and Bronchus cancer death rate was 22.5 per 100,00 people,” with 490 Lung and Bronchus cancer deaths reported that year among Hawaiians. The 2022 Hawaiian incidence rate of Lung and Bronchus cancer deaths was 28.6 percent lower than the national average of 30 deaths per 100,000 persons. Similarly to new cases, deaths are down among Hawaiians. Between 2018 and 2022, the Lung and Bronchus cancer death incident rate declined by 13.5 percent, from 26 percent per 100,000, while there 27 fewer deaths reported in 2022 compared to 2018.

FDA Recognizes Role of Flavors in Harm Reduction Products

**Taxpayers Protection Alliance, 1101 14th St. NW, Ste 500, Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 930-1716, www.protectingtaxpayers.org**

In June 2024, the FDA issued marketing orders for four menthol-flavored e-cigarette products.¹⁴ In their announcement, the agency remarked that the application had “sufficient evidence to demonstrate that permitting marketing of the products would be appropriate for the protection of public health.” Specifically, the FDA determined that “evidence submitted by the applicant showed that these menthol-flavored products provided a benefit for adults who smoke cigarettes ... that is sufficient to outweigh the risks of the product, including youth appeal.”

In January 2025, the FDA authorized the sale of 20 nicotine pouch products in a wide variety of flavors including menthol, spearmint and wintergreen, coffee, and citrus flavors.¹⁵ In its order, the agency noted that “due to substantially lower amounts of harmful constituents than cigarettes and most smokeless tobacco products ... the authorized products pose lower risk of cancer and other serious health conditions.” Similarly to the authorization orders for e-cigarettes, the FDA found that the nicotine pouch products “have the potential to provide a benefit to adults who smoke cigarettes ... that is sufficient to outweigh the risks of the products, including to youth.”

Given FDA’s newer stance on flavored tobacco harm reduction products, Washington lawmakers should refrain from policies which may impede adult access to products the federal government have found to be “appropriate for the protection of public health” – the standard required by bringing new products to market. Such policies could inadvertently lead to increases in combustible cigarette use.

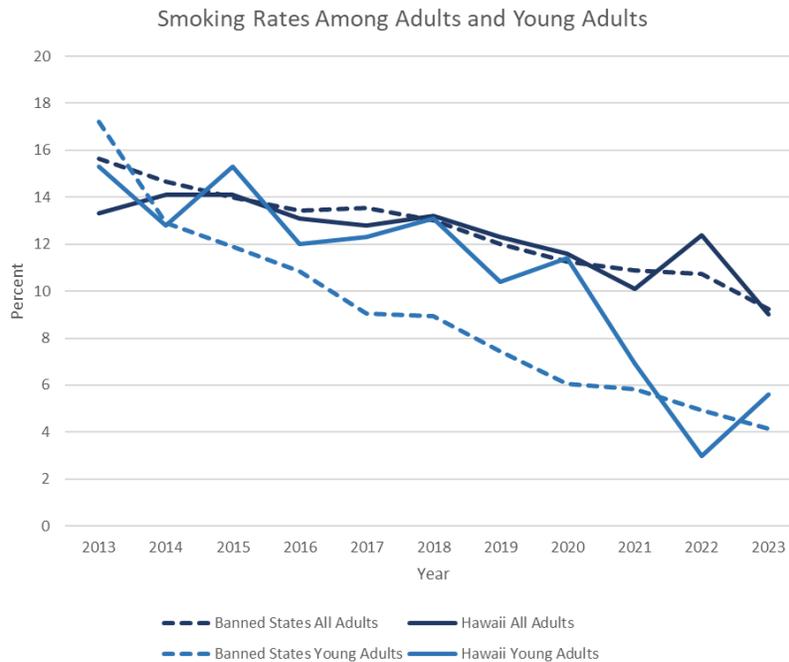
Existing Flavor Bans Have Not Significantly Reduced Smoking Rates, Hawaii Cigarette Use Remains Lower

The proposed bill points to several other states which have imposed flavored tobacco and/or vapor product bans at local and/or state levels. Firstly, such legislation is not needed for Hawaii, which has already seen similar declines in combustible cigarette product use, but these bans have also led to increased costs to the state and have bolstered black markets.

Three states including New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island have banned the sale of flavored vapor products, while California and Massachusetts have also banned the sale of flavored tobacco products – including menthol cigarettes – in addition to bans on flavored e-cigarette products.

In 2023, on average among the five states with flavor bans, approximately 9.2 percent of adults 18 years and older were currently smoking. Comparatively, in 2023, 9 percent of Hawaiian adults were currently smoking – or 2.2 percent lower than the rates in states with bans. Further, since 2020 (when flavor bans were first enacted in several states), Hawaiian adult smoking rates have experienced greater declines than in states with bans. Between 2020 and 2023, the percentage of Hawaiian adults who were currently smoking decreased by 22.4 percent, compared to a 17.9 percent decrease among adults in flavor ban states. Even more remarkably, the percentage of young Hawaiian adults aged 18 to 24 years old were smoking decreased by 50.9

percent between 2020 and 2023, compared to a 31.1 percent decline among young adults in states with flavor bans.



Further, existing statewide bans on flavored tobacco and vapor products have led to significant decreases in cigarette tax revenues, while forcing states to allocate additional funding for enforcement.

For example, Massachusetts banned the sale of flavored tobacco and vape products in 2020. Between 2020 and 2021, cigarette tax revenues decreased by 22.3 percent, representing a loss of \$107 million. Comparatively, neighboring New Hampshire and Rhode Island experienced a 14.4 percent and 13.9 percent, respectively, increase in cigarette tax collections. Between 2019 and 2023, cigarette tax revenue declined by 33.8 percent in Massachusetts.

And while Massachusetts has lost money, the Bay State has been forced to allocate additional state funding to its Illegal Tobacco Task Force to enforce the ban. Between the fiscal year (FY) 2020 and 2021 budgets, state funding increased by 73 percent from \$589,911 in 2020 to more than \$1 million in subsequent years.^{16 17}

Despite the increased funding, according to the task force’s 2024 report, “the smuggling of untaxed tobacco and [e-cigarettes] remains a challenge,” and that “personnel are routinely encountering or seizing untaxed menthol cigarettes, originally purchased in other states, and flavored [e-cigarettes] and cigars purchased from unlicensed distributors operating both within and outside” Massachusetts.¹⁸

Hawaii Should Utilize Tobacco Monies for Tobacco Control

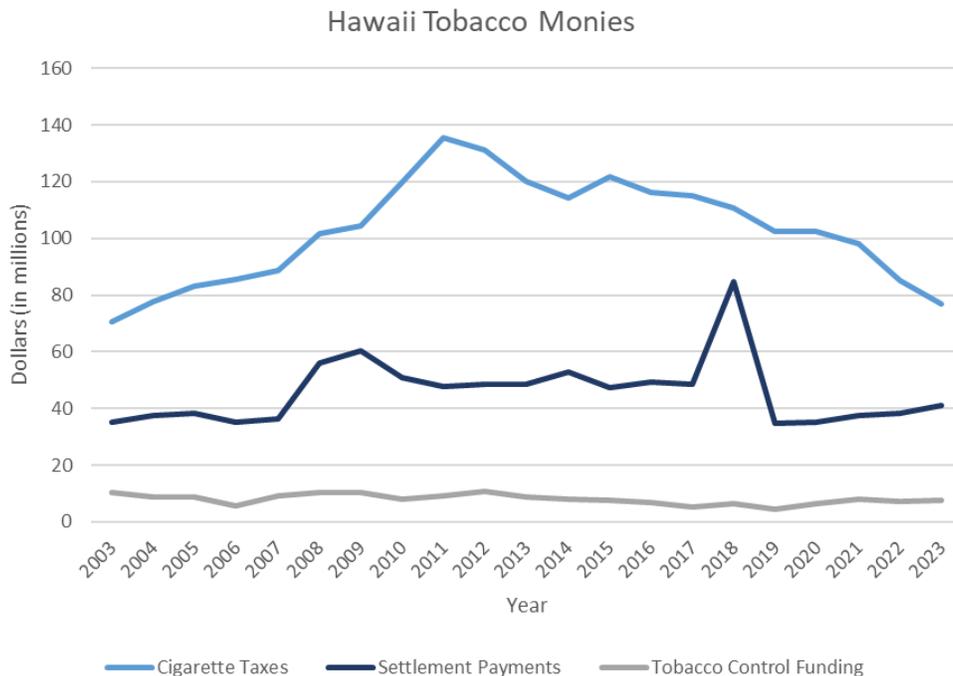
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(202) 930-1716, www.protectingtaxpayers.org**

Each year, states receive billions of dollars borne out of the lungs of persons who smoke. This revenue includes excise cigarette taxes and settlement payments. Yet, each year, states spend miniscule amounts of tobacco-related monies on programs to help adults quit smoking and prevent youth use.

In 2023, the Aloha State collected \$76.8 million in state excise tax revenue from combustible cigarettes. This was a 9.8 percent decrease from 2022's \$85.1 million, or \$8.3 million less. Between 2003 and 2023, Hawaii collected more than \$2.1 billion in cigarette taxes.

Since the 2000s, Hawaii collected annual payments from tobacco manufacturers based on the percentage of cigarettes and tobacco products sold in the state in that year. Hawaii collected \$40.9 million in settlement payments in 2023, a 6.5 percent increase from 2022's \$38.4 million, or an additional \$2.5 million. Since 2003, the Aloha State collected more than \$964 million in tobacco settlement payments.

While Hawaii collected \$117.7 million in tobacco-related monies in 2023, the state allocated only \$7.6 million in state funding towards tobacco control programs, including cessation, education, and youth prevention efforts, which was a 2.7 percent increase in funding from 2022's \$7.4 million. This amounts to 9.9 percent of taxes and 18.6 percent of settlement payments. In 2023, for every \$1 the state received in tobacco monies, it spent only \$0.06 on tobacco control efforts. Between 2003 and 2023, Hawaii collected more than \$3.1 billion tobacco monies, yet spent only \$168.6 million (or 5.4 percent) on tobacco control efforts during the same period.



Lawmakers Should Embrace Tobacco Harm Reduction

An estimated 30.8 million American adults smoked in 2020, or approximately 12.5 percent of the U.S. population.¹⁹ Smoking-related disease and deaths cost the United States more than \$300 billion each year, including \$225 billion attributed to medical costs and more than \$156 billion due to lost productivity.²⁰ In Hawaii, smoking costs the state \$142 million in Medicaid costs each year.²¹

In 1976, famed tobacco research Michael Russell remarked “people smoke for the nicotine, but die from the tar.”²² Today, cigarettes contain nearly 600 ingredients and when ignited release more than 7,000 chemicals in the tobacco smoke, including 69 which are known to cause cancer.²³

Nicotine, while not benign, is not responsible for causing cancer or the other ill effects caused by combustible cigarette smoke. In fact, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration,²⁴ the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,²⁵ and the American Cancer Society²⁶ all acknowledge that nicotine has addictive properties but is not responsible for the harms caused by various tobacco products.

Given that nicotine itself is not the harm-causing property of tobacco, consumers and manufacturers have moved forward with giving adults the options to try and switch to less harmful tobacco products, otherwise known as tobacco harm reduction.

Tobacco harm reduction takes into account the science and the individual, all the while reducing the harms related to cigarette smoking. Rather than shaming persons addicted to nicotine, tobacco harm reduction offers them an opportunity to use a less harmful product, while delivering nicotine in a manner that is effective at reducing their cravings.

- E-Cigarettes: Despite media alarmism, e-cigarettes are significantly less harmful than combustible cigarettes, as noted by numerous public health agencies. In 2015, Public Health England found e-cigarettes to be 95 percent less harmful than combustible cigarettes.²⁷ In 2021, the agency noted that “vaping is positively associated with quitting smoking successfully.”²⁸ In 2016, the UK Royal College of Physicians declared that e-cigarettes were unlikely to exceed five percent of the harms that are caused by smoking.²⁹ Not only does the UK government subsidize e-cigarettes as a cessation tool for people who smoke, vape shops can be found in hospitals in the country. In the United States, in 2018, of the estimated 10 million vapers, approximately 3 million had previously used combustible cigarettes.³⁰ In 2021, the FDA, through a new regulatory pathway, authorized the first e-cigarette product, finding that the product is “significantly less toxic than combusted cigarettes” and “could benefit addicted adult smokers who switch ... by reducing their exposure to harmful chemicals.”³¹

- **Heated Tobacco:** The US FDA has not only allowed for the marketing of a heated tobacco product, the manufacturer has been permitted to market it with a reduced risk claim, including that due to the product heating tobacco and not burning it, the process “significantly reduces the production of harmful and potentially harmful chemicals.”³² While the rollout in America has been limited (and currently hindered by a patent dispute), in other countries, heated tobacco products have been linked to significant reductions in adult smoking rates. A 2020 study by the American Cancer Society remarked that heated tobacco products “likely reduced cigarette sales in Japan.”³³
- **Nicotine pouches:** Nicotine pouches are used the same way as snus but deliver nicotine via infused fillers like plant-based fibers instead of pasteurized tobacco. They are the newest innovation on the nicotine market and they are as or less harmful than snus. As a result, they have been rising in popularity across the world. For example, a May 2022 study assessed the potential effect of nicotine pouches if introduced in the U.S. in 2000. The study estimated there would have been about 700,000 fewer deaths by 2050.
- **Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT):** NRT is the most endorsed form of tobacco harm reduction and is subsidized by federal and state health care quit-smoking programs. NRT includes gums, patches, lozenges, and prescription medication. Studies have found that similar rates of cessation success among users of various NRT products and smokeless and snus products.³⁴ Other tobacco harm reduction products have been found to be more effective. For example, a 2019 randomized controlled trial found that e-cigarettes were almost twice as effective as NRT in aiding in smoking cessation.³⁵
- **Smokeless:** Smokeless tobacco poses much lower risks than smoking, all while containing nicotine. A 2009 *Biomed Central* study analyzed 89 studies of smokeless tobacco use and cancer finding “very little evidence” of smokeless tobacco producing elevated cancer risks.³⁶ A 2011 review of epidemiologic studies found that snus and smokeless tobacco use to be “99% less hazardous than smoking.”³⁷
- **Snus:** Snus is an oral moist tobacco often used in pouches. It originated in Sweden and has been part of the country’s “tobacco culture” for more than a century. Snus has been directly linked to reducing smoking rates in the country. Swedish men, who have the highest rate of smokeless tobacco use in Europe and the lowest smoking rate, “also have the lowest rates of lung cancer and other smoking-related diseases in Europe.”³⁸ Further, a 2020 long-term study of Swedish snus users that were former smokers concluded that over “80% found snus of great importance to succeed with smoking cessation.”³⁹

As cigarettes remain available, it is imperative that policymakers offer the consumers access to less harmful tobacco products. Policymakers should avoid excessive regulations, unfair taxation, and outright prohibition when enacting policies regarding novel tobacco harm reduction innovations. Lawmakers should put forth policies that both inform consumers of the wide variety

of less harmful products, as well as allow the market to introduce products that are effective at both delivering nicotine in a less harmful manner and reducing smoking rates.

Conclusion

Increasing the state excise tax on combustible cigarettes may seem like an effective way to fund health care programs, but the evidence suggests otherwise. Cigarette tax revenue has proven unreliable, regressive, and disproportionately harmful to low-income and less-educated individuals. Rather than imposing additional financial burdens, policymakers should prioritize evidence-based strategies that address the root causes of smoking and leverage harm reduction tools. By embracing alternatives like e-cigarettes, heated tobacco products, and nicotine pouches, Hawaii can continue to reduce smoking rates while supporting public health initiatives without exacerbating economic disparities.

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Tobacco & Vaping 101:

Hawaii 2025

Lawmakers are often bombarded with misinformation on the products used by adults in their state. This annual analysis provides up-to-date data on the adults who use cigarettes and e-cigarette products in the Aloha State. This information also includes data on youth use, impacts of e-cigarettes and analyses of existing tobacco monies.

Key Points:

- In 2023, 102,737 Hawaii adults (9 percent) were currently smoking. This is a 27.4 percent decrease from 2022 and represents 38,905 fewer adults smoking.
- In 2023 (among all Hawaii adults), 5.6 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds, 10.3 percent of 25 to 44-year-olds, 10.9 percent of 45 to 64-year-olds, and 7 percent of adults aged 65 years or older were currently smoking combustible cigarettes.
- Among all adults earning \$25,000 or less in 2023, 18.7 percent were currently smoking compared to 5.9 percent of adults earning \$50,000 or more.
- Among all smoking adults in Hawaii in 2023, 26.7 percent were Asian, 25.6 percent were Multiracial (non-Hispanic), 21.1 percent were White, 13.8 percent were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 11.5 percent were Hispanic, and 1.3 percent were Black.
- In 2023, 115,294 Hawaii adults (10.1 percent) were currently using e-cigarettes. This is a 14.8 percent increase from 2022 and represents 14,774 additional adults vaping.
- Among all vaping adults in Hawaii in 2023, 24.4 percent were 18 to 24 years old, 56.4 percent were 25 to 44 years old, 14.5 percent were 45 to 64 years old, and 4.7 percent were 65 years or older.
- In 2023, for every one Hawaii high school student who was smoking, more than 68 adults were currently using cigarettes.
- In 2023, for every one Hawaii high school student who was vaping, more than 17 adults were currently using e-cigarettes.
- The introduction of e-cigarettes has not led to increases in cigarette smoking, but rather, correlates with significant declines in smoking rates among young adults.
- Between 2016 and 2023, smoking rates among Hawaii adults aged 18 to 24 years old decreased by 53.3 percent.
- E-cigarette use has declined among Hawaii young adults. Between 2022 and 2023, e-cigarette use among 18 to 24-year-olds decreased by 17.9 percent.
- Cigarette excise taxes in Hawaii disproportionately impact lower-income and lower-educated persons, while failing to significantly reduce smoking rates among that class.
- Among Hawaii adults earning \$25,000 or less, smoking rates increased on average by 0.4 percent annually between 2003 and 2023, while rates among adults earning \$50,000 or more decreased by 3.3 percent during the same period.
- In 2023, among Hawaii adults who did not graduate high school, 18.7 percent were currently smoking, while only 4.8 percent of college graduates were smoking.
- Hawaii woefully underfunds programs to prevent youth use of tobacco and/or vapor products and help adults quit smoking, while simultaneously receiving millions of dollars from the pockets of the adults who smoke. In 2023, for every \$1 the state received in tobacco monies, it spent only \$0.06 on tobacco control efforts.

Tobacco & Vaping 101:

Hawaii 2025

Adult Combustible Cigarette and E-Cigarette Use

In 2023, according to data from the annual Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated 102,737 adults (or 9 percent of Hawaiians) were currently smoking. This is a 27.4 percent decrease from 2022 when 12.4 percent reported current cigarette use. There were 38,905 fewer adults smoking in 2023 compared to 2022.

In 2023 (among all Hawaii adults), 5.6 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds, 10.3 percent of 25 to 44-year-olds, 10.9 percent of 45 to 64-year-olds, and 7 percent of adults aged 65 years or older were currently smoking combustible cigarettes. Between 2022 and 2023, smoking rates decreased among 25 to 44-year-olds by 27.6 percent, and among 45 to 64-year-olds by 6.5 percent. Rates increased among 18 to 24-year-olds by 86.7 percent, and among adults aged 65 years or older by 22.8 percent.

Among all adults earning \$25,000 annually or less in 2023, 18.7 percent reported currently smoking, compared to 5.9 percent of adults who earned \$50,000 or more per year.

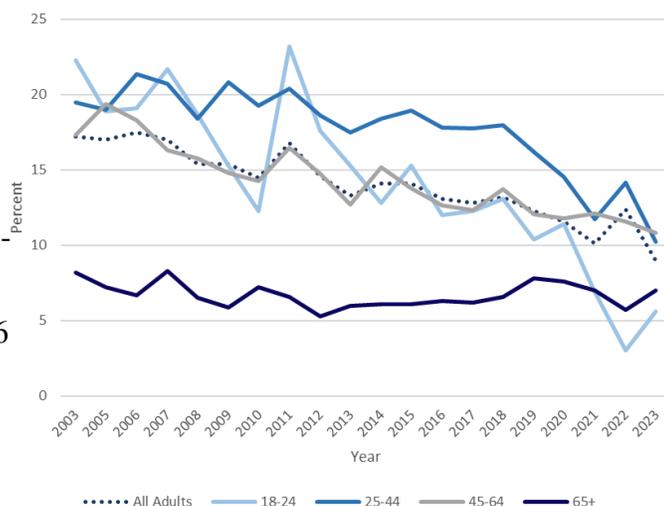
In Hawaii, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander adults reported smoking at a greater percentage of their identified race at 13.1 percent. This is compared to 12.8 percent of Multiracial (non-Hispanic) adults, 11.7 percent of Hispanic adults, 9.3 percent of Black adults, 7.9 percent of White adults, and 6.1 percent of Asian adults.

Yet, Asian adults made up a larger percentage of Hawaii's total adults smoking population. In 2023, Asian adults accounted for 26.7 percent of Hawaii's current smoking population, compared to Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander adults, who made up 13.8 percent. Multiracial (non-Hispanic) adults accounted for 25.6 percent, White adults made up 21.1 percent, Hispanic adults accounted for 11.5 percent, and Black adults made up 1.3 percent of Hawaii's adult smoking population in 2023.

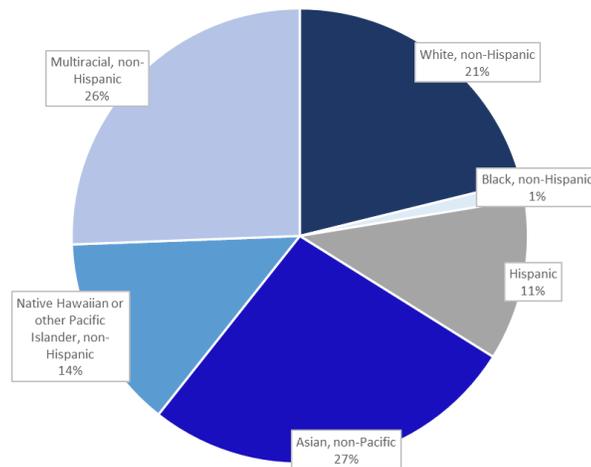
In 2023, an estimated 115,294 Hawaii adults (or 10.1 percent) were currently using e-cigarettes. This is a 14.8 percent increase from 2022 when 8.8 percent reported current e-cigarette use. There were an estimated 14,774 additional adults vaping in 2023 compared to 2022. There has been a 134.9 percent increase in adults vaping between 2016 and 2023. There were an additional 67,079 Hawaii adults vaping in 2023 compared to 2016.

Among Hawaii adults currently using e-cigarettes in 2023, 24.4 percent were 18 to 24 years old, 56.4 percent were 25 to 44 years old, 14.5 percent were 45 to 64 years old, and 4.7 percent were 65 years or older. Among adult e-cigarette users in Hawaii in 2023, 75.6 percent were 25 years or older.

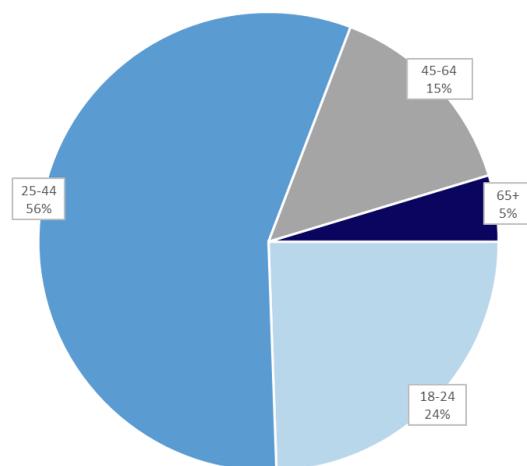
Adult Smoking Rates by Age
Hawaii



Percent of Adults Who Smoke, by Race
Hawaii 2023



Percent of Adults Who Vape, by Age
Hawaii 2023

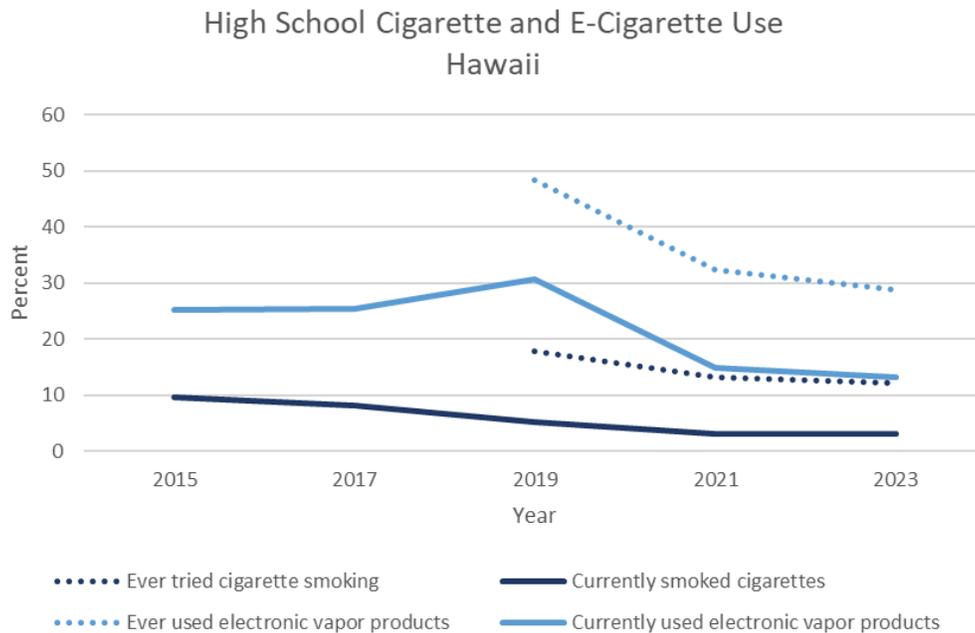


Tobacco & Vaping 101: Hawaii 2025

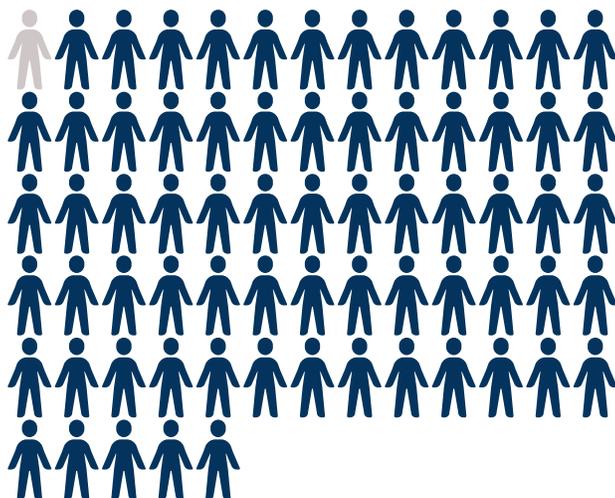
Youth Combustible Cigarette and E-Cigarette Use

Youth smoking rates are at historic lows in the Aloha State. In 2023, 12.1 percent of high school students reported ever trying combustible cigarettes, while 3 percent reported currently smoking, or having used the product on at least one occasion in the 30 days prior. In 2023, approximately 1,494 Hawaii high school students were smoking, compared to an estimated 102,737 Hawaii adults aged 18 and older who were currently smoking. For every one high school student smoking in 2023 in Hawaii, more than 68 adults were currently smoking.

Youth vaping continues to decline in the Aloha State. In 2023, 28.8 percent of Hawaii high school students reported ever using an e-cigarette, and 13.2 percent reported current use. Between 2019 and 2023, ever-use of e-cigarettes decreased by 40.4 percent, while current use declined by 56.9 percent. In 2023, approximately 6,574 Hawaii high school students were vaping, compared to 115,294 Hawaii adults aged 18 and older who were currently vaping. For every one high school student vaping in 2023 in Hawaii, more than 17 adults were using e-cigarettes.



Youth to Adult Smoking Ratio Hawaii 2023



Youth to Adult Vaping Ratio Hawaii 2023



Key

- = 1 High School Student
- = 1 Adult 18 years or older

Tobacco & Vaping 101: Hawaii 2025

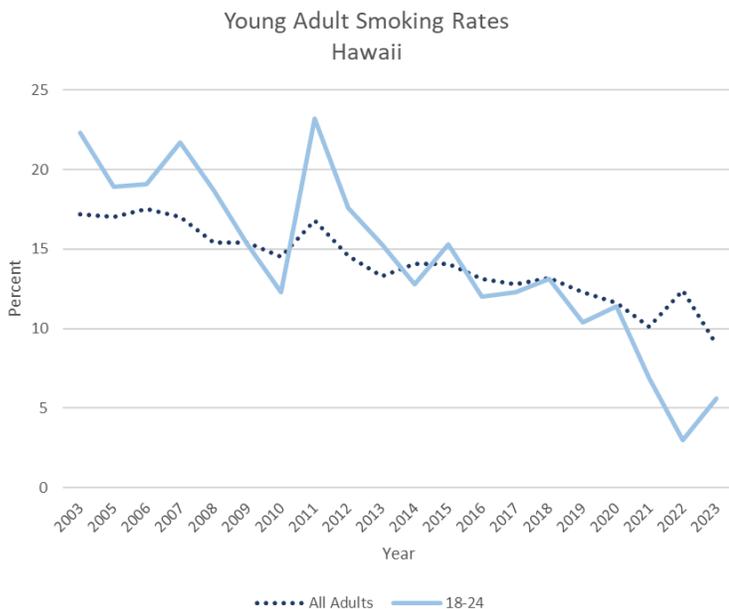
Young Adult Cigarette Use

The introduction of e-cigarettes has not led to increases in young adult cigarette smoking, but rather, correlates with significant declines.

In 2016, 12 percent of Hawaiians aged 18 to 24 years old were currently smoking. Between 2016 and 2023, smoking rates among young adults in the Aloha State decreased by 53.3 percent. Comparatively, among all Hawaii adults, smoking rates decreased by 31.3 percent during the same period. Interestingly, young adult smoking rates have increased in recent years, and should be monitored in future years. Between 2022 and 2023, young adult smoking rates increased by 86.7 percent, compared to a 27.4 percent reduction among all adults.

E-cigarette use has declined among young Hawaii adults. In 2023, 22.5 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds were currently using e-cigarettes, which was a 17.9 percent decrease from 2022.

Given the epic lows in young adult smoking rates, lawmakers must refrain from policies that restrict access to alternatives to smoking.

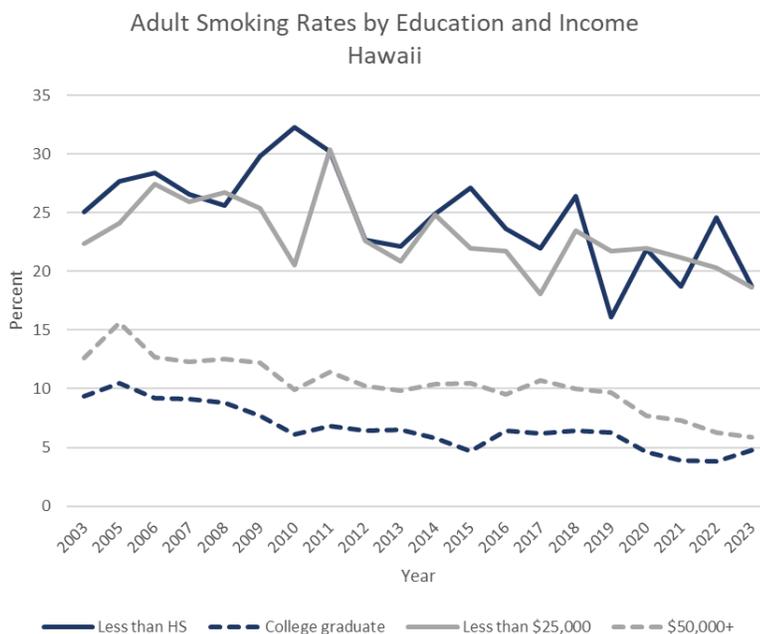


Effects of Cigarette Excise Taxes

Hawaii currently imposes a \$3.20-per-pack state cigarette excise tax. Lawmakers often justify excise taxes on cigarettes to deter persons from using combustible cigarettes. These taxes not only disproportionately harm lower-income and lower-educated adults; the taxes also fail to significantly reduce smoking rates among those persons.

Among Hawaii adults earning \$25,000 or less, smoking rates increased on average by 0.4 percent annually between 2003 and 2023, while rates among adults earning \$50,000 or more decreased by 3.3 percent during the same period. Among Hawaiians who did not graduate high school, 18.7 percent were currently smoking in 2023, compared to 4.8 percent of college graduates who were smoking.

Lawmakers should refrain from enacting further increases in cigarette taxes given their disproportionate effect on low-income persons, while failing to reduce smoking rates.



Tobacco & Vaping 101:

Hawaii 2025

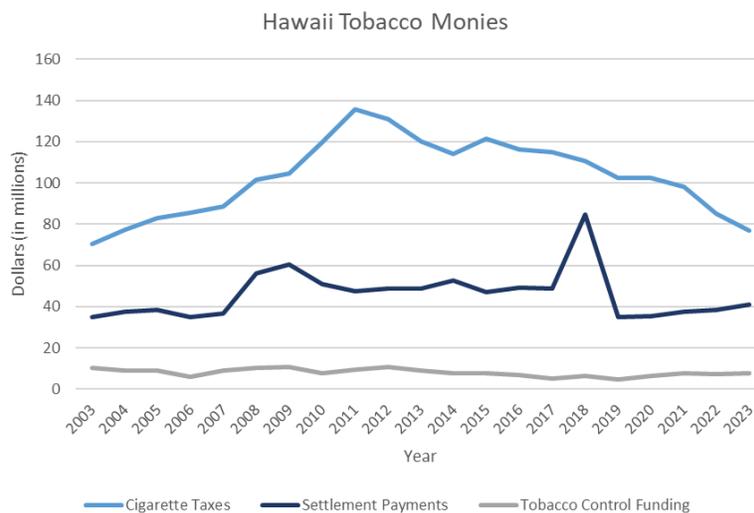
Tobacco Monies

Each year, states receive billions of dollars borne out of the lungs of persons who smoke. This revenue includes excise cigarette taxes and settlement payments. Yet, each year, states spend miniscule amounts of tobacco-related monies on programs to help adults quit smoking and prevent youth use.

In 2023, the Aloha State collected \$76.8 million in state excise tax revenue from combustible cigarettes. This was a 9.8 percent decrease from 2022's \$85.1 million, or \$8.3 million less. Between 2003 and 2023, Hawaii collected more than \$2.1 billion in cigarette taxes.

Since the 2000s, Hawaii has collected annual settlement payments from tobacco manufacturers based on the percentage of cigarettes and tobacco products sold in the state in that year, after successfully suing manufacturers for smoking-related health care costs. Hawaii collected \$40.9 million in settlement payments in 2023, a 6.5 percent increase from 2022's \$38.4 million, or an additional \$2.5 million. Since 2003, the Aloha State collected more than \$964 million in tobacco settlement payments.

While Hawaii collected \$117.7 million in tobacco-related monies in 2023, the state allocated only \$7.6 million in state funding towards tobacco control programs, including cessation, education, and youth prevention efforts, which was a 2.7 percent increase in funding from 2022's \$7.4 million, or an additional \$200,000. This amounts to 9.9 percent of taxes and 18.6 percent of settlement payments. In 2023, for every \$1 the state received in tobacco monies, it spent only \$0.06 on tobacco control efforts. Between 2003 and 2023, Hawaii collected more than \$3.1 billion tobacco monies, yet spent only \$168.6 million (or 5.4 percent) on tobacco control efforts during the same period.



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HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 1:35:42 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Juan He	Nonstop Convenience	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Juan He, and I am a local business owner operating a convenience store in Hawai‘i. I strongly oppose HB 756 due to the severe impact it will have on small business owners and their livelihoods. The proposed ban on menthol and flavored tobacco products would eliminate nearly 70% of my sales in this category, making it extremely difficult to sustain my business, support my employees, and continue serving my community. Many small, locally owned stores like mine depend on these legal sales to stay afloat, and this bill would force closures, cutting jobs and reducing tax revenue that funds essential state programs.

Beyond the economic devastation, HB 756 also backtracks on public health efforts by eliminating FDA-authorized vapor products that help adult smokers transition away from combustible cigarettes. These products have undergone extensive scientific review and have been approved based on their potential to reduce harm. By banning them, the state would be pushing adult consumers back to traditional cigarettes, undoing years of progress in smoking cessation and harm reduction. Instead of supporting a strategy that helps smokers quit, this bill removes safer alternatives and limits consumer choice.

Additionally, this ban will only fuel a thriving black market, making it even easier for youth to access unregulated, potentially dangerous products. Prohibition does not eliminate demand—it simply shifts sales to illegal sources where there are no age restrictions or product safety standards. Instead of penalizing responsible business owners who comply with the law, the state should focus on stronger enforcement of existing regulations to prevent youth access. I urge you to oppose HB 756 and consider a more balanced approach that protects public health while allowing local businesses to survive. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Juan He

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 1:44:56 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jeffery Kwon	Young's Wine & Spirit	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Opposition to HB 756

Submitted by: Jeffery Kwon

Young's Wine and Spirit

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I strongly oppose HB 756, which seeks to ban menthol, flavored tobacco, and vapor products, as it unjustly removes the rights of responsible adults to access harm-reduced alternatives to traditional cigarettes. Many of these products have undergone rigorous scientific review by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) through the Premarket Tobacco Product Application (PMTA) process, with some receiving federal authorization as appropriate for the protection of public health. By banning these products at the state level, Hawaii would override the FDA's regulatory authority and deny adult smokers access to federally approved alternatives that help them move away from more harmful combustible cigarettes.

This ban will not stop demand but will instead create a thriving black market where products are unregulated, untaxed, and lack any oversight. Unlike responsible retail businesses that comply with strict age verification laws, black market sellers have no incentive to prevent youth access. Prohibition will fuel illegal sales, expose consumers to potentially dangerous counterfeit products, and eliminate the safeguards that responsible retailers provide.

Rather than enacting an ineffective ban that encourages illicit trade and harms public health, the state should focus on enforcing existing laws that prevent youth access while allowing responsible adults the freedom to choose harm-reduction alternatives. I urge the committee to

reject HB 756 and instead support policies that balance public health, consumer rights, and responsible business practices.

Jeffery Kwon

Young's Wine and Spirit

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 1:54:51 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Young Park	Wawa Village Market	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Patrick Park, and I own two businesses employing 20 hardworking individuals. I strongly oppose HB756 because it threatens my ability to keep my businesses open and puts my employees' jobs and other c-stores employees at risk and causes significant further issues with underage usage.

Data supports the decline of usage with these bans, what the data doesn't show is the huge number of illicit products coming in daily via internet or illegal channels. These channels are not responsible and allow product to get into the hands of these children you seem to care so much about.

Small businesses are already struggling with high costs and economic challenges. HB756 adds another burden that could force and other business owners to cut hours, lay off employees, or even shut down. This bill doesn't fix the health concerns it aims to address; instead, it creates unintended consequences that harm local businesses, eliminate jobs, and push consumers toward unregulated alternatives. We have seen this happen before just look at the fireworks ban and the lack of enforcement. Instead of stopping illegal fireworks, it fueled a thriving black market causing death. The same will happen here, driving sales underground, where there is no oversight or safety regulation.

If we want real solutions, we need policies that balance public health with economic sustainability ones that bring business owners, policymakers, and community leaders together rather than imposing sweeping bans that violate the rights to FDA approved products.

I urge you to oppose HB756 and consider approaches that protect both health and local businesses.

Thank you,

Partick Park

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 756 HD1

TO: Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and Members

FROM: Michael Paul, Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist

DATE: February 21, 2025 (2:00pm)

Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHRC) **supports** HB 756 HD2, which would prohibit the sale of flavored tobacco products in the state.

With the ongoing support of the Hawai'i Community Foundation, HHRC continues to offer smoking cessation services that are tailored to meet the needs of our state's LGBTQ+ people through its [Hawai'i's Last Drag](#) (HLD) program. I proudly work as one of HLD's certified tobacco treatment specialists (CTTS). We work with individuals in ways that are most appropriate for their current needs, with trainings conducted in person or via phone, text, or videoconferencing. We provide smoking cessation products to assist them with quitting the consumption of smoked tobacco and other nicotine products.

Over the course of my professional experience as a CTTS, I encountered more people who use e-cigarettes and have never smoked than I have former smokers that have switched to e-cigarettes/vapes. Overwhelmingly these "never smokers" cite the flavors of these products, typically disposable vapes, as the reason they started using them.

Flavors make the delivery of nicotine, a highly addictive substance, more palatable to new users. I have frequently seen younger people swapping vapes to try each other's flavors, tying a social component into increased physical dependence.

[One study](#) found that "Nicotine increases the motivation for flavor conditioned reinforcers and the present studies show that tobacco flavor additives can interact with nicotine to promote more nicotine self-administration. The interaction between flavors additives and nicotine may promote nicotine exposure and subsequently dependence."

The high concentrations of nicotine found in a majority of disposable vapes, 50mg of nicotine per ml, combine with flavors that our brains already associate with pleasure to create a level of dependence unmatched in any other legally available over the counter product. While products with lower nicotine concentrations exist, the most popular products are the ones with the highest nicotine content.

[The Royal College of Ireland](#) found that many of the chemicals used to flavor e-liquids produce harmful chemicals when heated for inhalation. Of these new chemicals formed by heating up flavored e-liquids in vaping devices 127 were classified as “acute toxic”, 153 as “health hazards”, and 225 as “irritants”. Chemicals responsible for fruit, dessert, and candy flavors, which are very popular among those who vape, were found to create cancer causing chemicals, including [formaldehyde and acetaldehyde](#). It is important to note that many of the chemicals used to flavor e-liquids are rated as safe for food products, however they were never intended or approved to be heated to high temperatures for inhalation.

People who smoke menthol flavored cigarettes have a more challenging time quitting smoking than those that do not smoke menthols. Understanding this, tobacco companies continue to target specific populations like Native Hawaiians, African Americans, and LGBTQ+ persons, increasing health disparities in communities that already face significant obstacles to their health and well-being, including access to preventative health care services. [The Hawai'i Tobacco Quitline](#) found that 81% of Native Hawaiians that enrolled in their program were using menthol cigarettes, compared to 55% for all other enrollees.

Menthol is added to nearly all cigarettes, not just those that are menthol flavored. Per the CDC, “[almost all the cigarettes sold in the United States contain some natural or lab-created menthol](#).” Menthol has a cooling effect and reduces the harshness of tobacco smoke, even at levels so low that no menthol flavor is detectable. Menthol does this by stimulating the trigeminal nerve, the largest cranial nerve, and our olfactory receptors effectively giving a “one -two punch” straight to our brain.

Tobacco companies know how effective menthol is when it comes to driving nicotine dependence. Studying their [publicly available documents](#) reveals they know menthol has a high impact on satisfaction even at low levels of nicotine. More industry-wide documentation has been gathered [here](#).

HHRC’s mission is to reduce harm, promote health, create wellness, and fight stigma in Hawai’i and the Pacific. We work with many individuals impacted by poverty, housing instability, and other social determinants of health. Many have behavioral health problems, including those related to substance use and mental health conditions. Many of our program clients and participants have also been deeply impacted by trauma, including histories of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 2:26:56 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brian Yi	Kona Liquor Store	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Opposition to HB 756

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brian Yi, and I am a local business owner in Kona, Hawai'i. I am writing in strong opposition to HB 756, which seeks to ban menthol and flavored tobacco products. While I understand and respect the intent behind this bill, the reality is that it will have severe unintended consequences for local businesses like mine. Banning these products will not eliminate demand but will instead drive consumers to online sellers and unregulated markets, resulting in significant revenue loss for law-abiding retailers. Many small businesses, including convenience stores and vape shops, rely on the sale of these products to sustain operations, and such a ban could force closures and job losses across the state.

Additionally, the passage of HB 756 will significantly impact state tax revenue. Hawai'i generates millions of dollars in excise taxes from tobacco and vaping products, a critical source of funding for public health programs, education, and other essential services. By eliminating legal sales of menthol and flavored tobacco, the state will inadvertently reduce tax collections while failing to curb overall consumption. Consumers will turn to online retailers, neighboring states, or illicit markets that do not contribute tax revenue to Hawai'i. This policy could create a financial gap that will have to be filled by other means, potentially burdening taxpayers and harming the very communities this bill aims to protect.

Finally, this bill will disproportionately impact responsible adult consumers who choose these products legally. Menthol products, in particular, are preferred by a large segment of adult smokers, and banning them will not stop consumption but rather push it underground. Instead of outright bans, I urge lawmakers to consider more effective, balanced solutions, such as stronger enforcement against youth access and public education campaigns. A collaborative approach

would better serve the interests of public health while preserving local businesses and tax revenue. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to vote NO on HB 756. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Brian Yi

Owner, Kona Liquor Store



Testimony in Strong Opposition to House Bill 756 HD2 on 2-21-25

Dear House FIN Committee,

The Hawaii Smokers Alliance STRONGLY OPPOSES HB 756) relating to the ridiculous prohibition of flavors for vaping and tobacco products on retailers, constituents, and visitors that enjoy e-cigarette. The pernicious House Bill 756 is strongly opposed for the following reasons:

1. This flavor ban will place local retailers at a massive disadvantage when they now have to compete with online, smuggled, or person to person transactions. The vape products have a much higher value to volume ratio than most traditional tobacco products making them highly prone to smuggling, mailing, or in person transport from the mainland. Making the flavored products not available in stores will close many a retailers' door.
2. In addition, HB756, will also be immediately countered by simply adding flavoring not intended for vaping into the product. This flavoring will not have been tested for compatibility. This will create a significant public health problem since these substances are unregulated, can cause adverse reactions, and could even be laced with drugs such as fentanyl. This is already a problem with online pharmaceuticals.
3. Simply put, this bill WILL NOT WORK because of the ease of subverting it. The only people that will "win" are anti-smoking lobbyists that get a cash performance bonus for passing HB756.
4. Additionally, the major of users of these products are Democrats. We simply can't understand why some members of the majority party would attack its' own voters with a bill such as this and turn people away from their own party or to more reasonable Democrats wanting to gain office in the primaries. **How about actually representing constituents that love these products instead?**

Respectfully request that this shameful bill which is doomed to fail not leave the FIN committee. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Michael Zehner, Co-chair of the Hawaii Smokers Alliance.

808-952-0275. Hawaiiismokersalliance.net



**WAIANAЕ COAST
COMPREHENSIVE
HEALTH CENTER**

Friday, February 21, 2025 at 2:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 308 & Videoconference

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

To: Chair Kyle Yamashita
Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi

From: Ian Ross
Public Affairs Director
ianross@wcchc.com | (808)652-3380

RE: TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 756 HD2 - RELATING TO HEALTH

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice-Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the House Committee on Finance,

My name is Ian Ross, and I submit this testimony on behalf of Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center (WCCHC) in **strong support of HB 756 HD2**. This bill is a crucial step in protecting Hawai'i's youth from nicotine addiction, reducing health disparities, and addressing the ongoing harms caused by flavored tobacco products.

As a Federally Qualified Health Center serving the West O'ahu, we witness firsthand the devastating impact of tobacco-related illnesses. This bill strengthens regulations on misleading nicotine product labeling, enhances enforcement measures to prevent youth access, and ensures that our keiki are protected from an industry that profits off addiction. Hawai'i spends over \$526 million annually on smoking-related healthcare costs—a burden that we, as healthcare providers, are familiar with. By passing HB756 HD2, we can reduce future harm and long-term healthcare costs while protecting the next generation.

We urge you to **support** this bill and stand with our communities in making Hawai'i a healthier place for all.

Luke Itomura

February 21, 2025

House Committee on Finance

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB756

Aloha Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and members of the committee



Photo of Collected Vapes from Schools Across Hawaii

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of HB756**. I am Luke Itomura, a sophomore at Punahou School. Today, I stand alongside numerous Hawaii youth united against the alarming youth flavored vaping epidemic that threatens our health and future. We collectively believe that passing this legislation is an essential step in protecting the health and future of the youth.

At just 13 years old, I was offered a flavored vape by another youth for the first time. This youth smoker used many tactics to peer pressure me into trying it. Their main tactic was telling me it was a delicious Hawaiian Sun flavor; a local favorite. At that moment, I realized how easy it is to fall for the appeal of flavored vapes. My friends in the sixth grade had also mentioned that they were offered flavored vapes. For people as young as twelve, flavors like watermelon or Jolly Rancher are an enticing death trap. What starts as innocent curiosity can turn into a lifelong addiction filled with lung cancer, strokes, heart disease, and countless other diseases. There is no other product on the market that kills up to 50% of its users who don't quit ([WHO](#)).

Past precedent proves that **bills that end the sale of flavored tobacco are effective**. A study published in JAMA Network evaluating statewide restrictions on flavored e-cigarette sales in the US from 2014 to 2020 found that statewide restrictions were associated with reductions of 25.01% to 31.26% in total e-cigarette unit sales compared to states without restrictions ([Ali et al., 2022](#)). Thus, it is clear that similar results will yield from the passage of HB756, protecting our innocent keiki from Big Tobacco

Many opposers bring up the argument that Hawaii would lose tax revenue by ending the sale of flavored tobacco products. However, the full picture must be taken into account. The reality is that while the state would likely see a reduction of tax revenue in the short term, **long-term cost savings would be substantial**. A report by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids ([CTFK](#)) found the following:

Annual healthcare costs in Hawaii directly caused by smoking	\$611 million
Medicaid costs caused by smoking in Hawaii	\$152.3 million
Residents' state & federal tax burden from smoking-caused government expenditures	\$955 per household
Smoking-caused productivity losses in Hawaii (from smoking-caused premature death and illness that prevent people from working)	\$1.1 billion

By passing HB756, Hawaii can reduce these costs, thereby saving more in the long run. A study published in *Tobacco Control*, an international peer-reviewed journal, shows that Hawaii can expect these savings: it found that prohibiting flavored tobacco leads to savings in healthcare expenses and increased labor productivity ([Proctor, 2013](#)). **84% of Hawaii registered voters support ending the sale of flavored tobacco products**, justifying that this is a highly wanted policy ([Ward Research](#)).

Flavored tobacco has no place in the hands of the youth. Passing HB756 is the first step in securing a tobacco-free future.

Thank you for your time.

Mahalo,

Luke Itomura

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 11:29:45 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diana Baldwin	Kailua High School	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

House Committee on Finance

Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair

Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair

February 19, 2025

RE: Support of Bills HB380 HD1 and HB756 HD2 Being Heard in Committee

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the House Committee on Finance,

On behalf of Kailua High School, we strongly support having HB380 HD1 and HB756 HD2 heard in committee as flavored tobacco products are a big problem for our students. I have served as our Parent Community Network Coordinator for 15 years and Family Resource Center Director for nearly 4 years and am aware of a huge uptick in flavored tobacco use among our students.

Covid continues to put a damper on our overall ability to support our students and families as we did pre-Covid and we need to re-focus our efforts on their simple needs. The adaptive agenda that we have come to embrace as the "new normal" has made many underlying issues even more apparent and important to our students and families (increased mental health issues, lower attendance leading to lower overall graduation rates, extended loss of social and academic connections, vaping as well as the use of flavored tobacco products).

Genuine and targeted legislation is needed in our communities limiting/making it more difficult for our students to access flavored tobacco products. At Kailua High School, we have addressed this by partnering with Kevin Ramirez at The Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Hawaii to educate our parents and students to make them aware of the dangers of tobacco use. Additionally, our administration had smoke/vape detectors installed in student

restrooms. Having a status quo approach is not the best way to protect our children. We need to be proactive and establish protective boundaries for them! I am asking you to put our keiki before tax revenue. They are our future!

On behalf of Kailua High School, I respectfully urge these bills to be heard in Committee so that families and schools have the direct support they need to help their children thrive without the influence of flavored tobacco products. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Diana Baldwin

Parent Community Network Coordinator &

Family Resource Center Director

Kailua High School

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 11:52:10 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristin Mills	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Kristin Mills and I am a resident and voter in Pukalani, on Maui. I am also a parent and a health educator.

I am in strong support of HB756, HD2. Hawaii has among the highest rates of middle school and high school e-cigarette (ESD) use in the nation and youth vaping has been declared an epidemic by the U.S. Surgeon General.

As a parent and health educator, this is extremely concerning as there are numerous health impacts from e-cigarettes. Nicotine addiction affects kids' ability to focus and learn at school, it affects their physical and mental/emotional health, it affects their relationships, and it affects their self-confidence. The list goes on. Further, once teens become addicted to nicotine, it's very difficult to quit. Teens are also particularly vulnerable to nicotine, which permanently impacts their still developing brain.

It's no coincidence that the rise in youth e-cigarette use has coincided with an explosion of sweet and minty e-liquid flavors used to hook kids. Tobacco companies are making and marketing deadly and addictive products right here in Hawaii that look and taste like our favorite childhood flavors (Hawaiian POG, Ono Orange Cream, Hawaiian Sweet Rolls, and Halawa Guava). They make these flavors to "hook" their next customers... Our youth! And it's not OK. Data has shown that 8 out of 10 youth who ever used tobacco products started with a flavored product, and more than half of youth tobacco users use menthol products.

I ask the committee to please support HB756, HD2 and prohibit the sale of **ALL** flavored tobacco and electronic smoking devices, including menthol, mint, and wintergreen in the wording of this bill. This is vital to the health of our youth! Menthol, mint, and wintergreen flavors are particularly enticing, as they mask the harshness, allowing for deeper and longer inhalations, making menthol cigarettes and e-cigarettes another popular starter product and harder to quit. The tobacco industry has a long history of marketing menthol cigarettes to youth and vulnerable groups. In Hawaii, 78% of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander smokers use menthol cigarettes.

We need to protect our keiki. The scientific evidence is clear, flavored tobacco and electronic smoking devices (including menthol, mint, and wintergreen) have the greatest appeal to youth.

Finally, when looking at the true cost of tobacco vs. money made from tobacco in taxes, please consider the true cost of tobacco in terms of healthcare costs, lost income, and cost of being a burden to society and to one's family. The cost associated with tobacco use is HIGH.

We must end the sale of flavored tobacco products here in Hawaii, for our youth and for our economy.

Sincerely, Kristin Mills, PhD-ABD

Parent and Public Health Educator

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 12:27:11 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Maddalynn Seseapasara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Menthol is just as, if not more, harmful than any other flavor in tobacco. Notorious for its ability to mask the harshness of tobacco, menthol makes it easier to start and harder to quit. If our aim is to protect our keiki and reduce the burden of tobacco in our communities, we must include menthol.

One of the reasons I strongly support this bill.

Mahalo,

Maddalynn Seseapasara

February 19, 2025

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance

My name is Dylan Arisumi, and I am a high school student attending Maui High School. I serve as a member of the youth council for the Coalition for Tobacco-Free Hawai'i. I am in **strong support for HB756**.

As a student, it's hard to ignore when people think vaping is just a harmless trend, but it's not. I've seen how flavored vapes are marketed directly to people like me. Fruit, candy, mint—these flavors make vaping seem harmless, almost like a fun treat. But they're not. Flavored vapes are a gateway for young people to get hooked on nicotine. It's easier to ignore the dangers when the product tastes like candy or fruit. For those of us who play sports, vaping can have an even greater impact. Nicotine and other chemicals found in vapes can harm lung function, making it harder to breathe during physical activity. This means reduced stamina, slower recovery, and less endurance, which can really hold you back in sports. The chemicals can also mess with your brain, affecting focus, coordination, and reaction time—critical things you need in sports. It's really troubling when I see younger students getting involved, thinking it's cool or safe.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and for supporting the youth and our future

Dylan Arisumi

Kahului

Chair Kyle Yamashita
Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

I am writing in **strong support of HB756**.

Why is this important? I believe flavored tobacco products are targeting kids because the flavors sound like candy. For example cotton candy, blue raspberry, and more. The impact of nicotine addiction I see in students in my school and community is negatively affecting their academics, participation in sports and clubs, and relationships with family and friends. Due to industry marketing and the wide range of flavors youth look at e-cigarettes like it's normalized and use it to cope with their mental health problems. They often start through other students or someone they know. We're in an age group where we can be so easily influenced that, when one friend does it, so does the whole friend group.

One time during my free period at school my friends were hanging out. another friend came up to us and she sat down. She started vaping said she was vaping and the smoke detector in the bathroom went off and it started saying that security was being called so she ran away. Instead of trying to catch and punish youth who are addicted, we need to get rid of the flavors so they don't even start.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Kaycee Miguel
Ewa Beach

Chair Yamashita
Vice Chair Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

My name is RJ and I am in strong support for bill **HB756** to end the sale of flavored tobacco products.

I have seen many impacts of nicotine addiction in my peers. They seem to feel like they need their vape to get by the day or they will feel poorly. They are so fixated on making sure they get a puff to feel better and perform better. I know peers that vaped that stopped doing what they loved after they started vaping, and I know peers that take vape breaks.

One personal example of how vaping has affected me is I had a best friend lash out at me, and almost got physical because they lost their vape which they just misplaced. They have not apologized and I thought I was a good enough friend to them that they would even have the decency to apologize.

Another example of how vaping has personally affected me is in the last 7 months of owning a license because the driver was distracted from using their vape. During one of these occurrences I noticed that they were reaching for something in the passenger seat, and low and behold it was their vape. That particular event happened when I was on my way to provide testimony at the last Maui County Council hearing that passed our flavor ban in December.

Based on my personal experiences with members in my community who vape, we need to end the sale of flavored tobacco products."

RJ
Lahaina

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance

I'm writing to show my support for **HB756**. It would reach the goal of finally ending the sale of flavored tobacco products in our communities and finally protect the youth.

I have seen first hand how vaping can affect youth. It started off in my Sophomore year when I heard that one of the most popular boys bathrooms was closed due to extensive tobacco usage. The smell was coming outside of the door and was barricaded for a long time, preventing anyone from entering. I never knew anyone personally who used tobacco products, but as I grew up, I realized that I knew many of the people who went into the bathrooms to use vape products. I heard news about students using it secretly, and I realized how big of an issue it was. It was so secretive, however, that I hadn't realized until too late. Some of my childhood friends began to use the products, just to try it at first, and started using them more frequently as they gained more access. While I don't think they became addicted, just trying the products in the first place was an immense concern because that is how addictions start.

Tobacco companies are intentionally targeting youth and creating the youth vaping epidemic that we are all experiencing. The fact that flavored tobacco products have innocent flavors and brand names like Hawaiian Sun, Lychee, or even something simple like Bubblegum shows how vapes are targeted towards children. No adult would likely buy such innocent flavors. The flavors and designs of these products entice children, convincing them that it might not be so bad in the beginning, and slowly spiral them into large addictions.

I know how secretive my peers can be when it comes to using tobacco products. Some come to school completely normal, but I know that they used such products over the weekend with their friends. It's a terrifying realization that those around me use those products frequently, eventually leading to addictions that will affect their lives forever. Many of these peers are incredible individuals: they have dreams and the skills to achieve them. Tobacco products and peer pressure to use them both in and out of school should not come in the way of their futures. No financial or other factor should come close to this argument, because these are the futures of youth. Once you start, it's so hard to fix yourself. So let's make sure that people don't start at all.

Chani Takenouchig
Ala Moana

Chair Kyle Yamashita
Vice Chair Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

February 19th 2025

I **support HB756** and its mission to end the sale of flavored tobacco products.

Flavored tobacco products are hooking kids. All of the people I know who use flavored tobacco (vapes) are all under the age of say 17. I know that there are adults who use these products as well, however they are not the majority that I see. Flavors are used to hook people, kids especially, as they make it seem like no big deal, like candy. One of my friends who do vape are hooked not only on specific flavors but also vapes that you can play games on supposedly. The more interesting and inviting the products can seem, the more likely they are to hook kids.

I want these products to be banned due to the effects they have on people's health and to make sure no more of my peers get hooked. I hate to think about how damaged my generation can become just because they got hooked on a flavor while they were younger. I want to live in a future where my peers aren't being targeted by harmful tobacco products.

Rya Ortogero
Kahului

Representative Kyle Yamashita: Chair
Representative Jenna Takenouchi: Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Finance

I'm writing to **support HB756**. This bill would finally end the sales of flavored tobacco products. The tobacco companies have been targeting youth and hooking them on their dangerous substances.

As a current high school student, I see the adverse effects Tobacco products can have on my peers, and helping to end the selling of those products as a whole, and not just in kids, would significantly change the lives of many of those students. When I think back to my experience with flavored Tobacco products, I immediately remember the time when I had to go to the bathroom so wrong that I went during my school's recess period. Ordinarily, I try not to go to the restroom during school hours because I have heard stories about the housing of nicotine use, yet I was still shocked at the number of artificial sick flavors that hit my nose as soon as I stepped inside. There were about four girls, all so consumed with gossiping while smoking their e-cigarettes that they did not even notice when I immediately turned around to leave. I never went to that bathroom again, but I still think about how they were smoking something they knew was not allowed in a public school bathroom and did not even notice when someone walked inside.

It was almost as if it was normalized in middle schools where most students are ages 11 to 14, even though the legal age is 21. Passing this bill will put an end to the illegal substance abuse going on in middle schools, high schools, and even elementary schools, which in turn will lead to more students making the right choices for their bodies.

Please support **HB756**, Thank You for Reading,
Violet Kato

Chair Yamashita
Vice Chair Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

I **support HB756** so that less people can smoke and vape, especially kids since they are so young and it will hurt them early on if they vape at such a young age. I believe flavored tobacco products are targeting kids because kids love to have flavored things and will enjoy things if they are their favorite flavors. These flavors are often fruity and named in a way where it targets kids like a bubblegum flavor for example.

Impacts of nicotine addiction that I see is wasting a lot of money and time doing these products that have nicotine in them. I know a few people who have been addicted to vapes and cigarettes often starting with products that have a flavor in them. Their addiction has impacted them and others around by often not being able to go over 20 minutes without hitting their vape again and they often begin to cough a lot.

I'm in support of HB756 because that is in the step of finally working towards becoming a tobacco free generation.

Kaulana Kraan
Aiea

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance.

I strongly support **HB756**.

In my middle school, I haven't seen but I heard from some friends about their classmates going in the bathrooms during class and vaping with stuff they somehow got their hands on. Flavors is what is pulling kids to vape more because both the feeling of vaping and the taste is probably more enjoyable than tasting smoke.

Please end the sale of flavored tobacco products to help protect people from vapes.

Mahina
Maui

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance

I support HB756.

Some of the impacts of nicotine addiction that I see in the students are hiding in the bathroom to do vape, overall making the bathrooms an unsafe space. I have a friend who did not like the idea of going to the bathroom alone. At the time I could just laugh as a friend but in hindsight the overall stigma and stereotypes of youth using these types of things likely made him feel unsafe. We all deserve to feel safe in our communities and should not feel like we can't enter certain spaces.

This is especially happening to kids because of flavors. It's disgusting how companies are masking vapes under the guise of different flavors, pushing the notion that vapes are a treat akin to candy, with candy/treats being desirable for kids. It is a decision very clearly being done to target children, who are very vulnerable. It's one more thing to trap them into trying it just once to see what the flavors all about, in an addiction that only benefits the companies who market them.

Even if it makes my friends feel unsafe, I believe it's unfair to punish the youth of our age for getting addicted to a substance that they were being subconsciously and maliciously drawn to by big companies. Of course it's not appropriate to vape in class, but we should definitely have help rather than bring down the mindset.

Logan Ortogero

Kahului

Chair Kyle Yamashita

Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi

Members of the Committee on Finance

I **strongly support HB756**, with the goal of ending the harmful sale of flavored tobacco products.

Flavored tobacco products are targeted towards kids. Products often have colorful, eye-catching packaging that resembles candy or snacks, making them more appealing to younger consumers. Flavors often have names that are incredibly vibrant and fun, which can sound appealing to many children. Teens may think that the minty cooling flavor of menthol is less harmful and forgiving than regular tobacco products. However, this is not the case. Vaping in youth has become a massive problem that is affecting the community and that is due to how flavor tobacco is being targeted to us youth.

I believe flavored tobacco products are a direct threat to my health and the health of my peers. I ask you to act now to ban these products ensuring a safer future for all of us.

Louis Taguchi

Honolulu

February 20th 2025

Aloha Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance

I strongly support **HB756** because of the impact I am seeing it has on my friends, community, and youth.

One personal experience is my close college friend vapes and she started with flavored disposable vapes. Whenever she is anxious, she reaches for her vape even though she knows it's not actually helping her in any way. She has recently started smoking menthol cigarettes as well, furthering her nicotine addiction. I am concerned because she now uses both vapes and cigarettes, and I believe this would not have happened if menthol flavors had not been added to tobacco products. She hates the smell of straight tobacco, so had flavors not been added, she probably wouldn't smoke at all.

Flavored tobacco products, especially menthol, must be banned as it is another avenue for youth to become addicted. My close friend, like many others, was first drawn to vaping because of the flavored options, and now that addiction has progressed to smoking cigarettes. The addition of menthol flavors to cigarettes has only made the transition easier for her.

What's also troubling is that she often asks to vape in a car, spreading chemicals around through secondhand smoke. This has the potential to harm others around her, particularly when it comes to children or non-smokers. This is a serious concern that our local governments should address.

It is clear that flavored tobacco products are a daily issue for many youth, and our City Council/State should address that problem.

Thank you for considering this important issue.

Theresa Ng
Honolulu

Chair Kyle Yamashita
Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

I strongly support HB756 so that we can end the youth vaping epidemic.

I do not know anyone personally who has become addicted to tobacco products, but I have seen many others in my community and in my school who are constantly craving for the next hit of their vape or waiting for the next moment they can smoke. In school, some students have become so addicted that they smoke in the classrooms and bathrooms because they can't fight their addiction. It makes others around them uncomfortable and puts the individual facing the addiction in a position where they can get in trouble if they haven't already. It affects so many aspects of their lives. Students become so focused on the next time they'll be able to smoke that they stop focusing on their education. Oftentimes, these people with addictions are trying to cope with issues they already have, and smoking only amplifies their issues, creating disorder in their lives. They don't focus on what's important for their success and focus on their addiction instead.

Flavors hook kids. Tobacco companies don't care what happens to their consumers as long as they are able to make money. Kids are easily influenced and nicotine addiction only keeps these kids coming back for more, keeping tobacco companies running. Menthol flavors are appealing to kids. A kid most likely wouldn't want to smoke something that is flavorless and "boring." But when colors and flavors are added to these products, kids will want to participate. Penalizing instead of offering support and counseling for youths struggling with addiction can only add to the negative emotions they are already feeling dealing with their addiction. Penalties may only draw them closer to their addiction rather than leaving it behind.

I have a history of smoking in my family, and it has caused me to lose important people in my life sooner than expected. Smoking isn't the solution to struggles and hardship in life, and only amplifies those negative feelings. After my dad came back from war, he smoked almost every day to cope with the trauma he had faced, but he realized that if he continued to use smoking as a way to cope with his struggles, he wouldn't be able to be around long enough to raise his 4 daughters and maintain a strong family relationship with us.

Addison
Aiea

Chair Yamashita
Vice Chair Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

I'm in full **support of HB756**. It's something that will really make a difference.

Even though I never tried to vape or smoke, I did have friends around me who vape or smoke. Most of the people that I see that take usage do start to care less about their academics, clubs, and sport. The parents relationship is also deteriorated but depending on the friends they are around with, it seems like it doesn't affect it. It is being advertised as being a healthier option to smoking real cigarettes. However, vaping is definitely more dangerous as it contains more nicotine than the normal cigarettes.

Flavors make it easier to start smoking but harder to quit so it can have a negative influence on teenagers in Hawaii. We should definitely stop anything that contains a harmful dose of nicotine.

Instead of punishing kids for getting hooked on vapes, there should be some kind of reinforcement to prevent more tobacco use. We should ban flavored tobacco so kids will not be exposed to harmful doses of nicotine.

Darren
Aiea

Chair Kyle Yamashita

Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi

Members of the Committee on Finance

I support HB756 because it will cause meaningful change.

One personal experience I have had is my friend is addicted to vaping, they started vaping a peach ice vape. Their addiction has impacted them because she started getting more headaches and started to feel sick more often. She would never leave anywhere without her vape. We were very close but when she started vaping and using her vape often she started to become grumpy and put in a not so good mood. We would talk less and less and then later on we stopped being friends and our friendship was over because of a vape.

The impact of nicotine addiction I see in students at my school is they have a harder time focusing and learning in class. Vaping is definitely affecting their academics for the peers in my community. But I don't think there should be youth penalties because it is not fair since they are targeting kids with all the fruity flavors.

I believe flavored tobacco products are targeting kids, for example they promote the different kinds of fruity flavors. Also, it's important to me that menthol flavors be included in the ban for both e-cigarettes and other tobacco products because it makes the product look better and look like it tastes good.

Sayde

Ewa Beach

Chair: Representative Yamashita
Vice Chair: Representative Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

I support HB756 because I do know people that have become addicted to tobacco products. I believe that they did start with flavored products. Their addictions kinda lead to a snowball effect, once they started doing it then other people around them started to do it too. Vaping has affected some of my old friends because they had become so reliant on vapes that they would become extremely mad and even unpleasant to be around because of the fact that all they could think about was vaping. It had affected there schoolwork and there personal life a tremendous amount.

Some impacts of nicotine addiction that I see in students are they are extremely dependent on vape, and this makes them miss class time since they are always in the bathroom smoking. In turn, leading them to have diminished grades because they are missing class. In sports, they become out of breath extremely easy and sometimes have trouble breathing. Sometimes it puts strain on our friendship because I don't wanna be around them when they do it.

This is important to focus on because flavored tobacco products are targeting kids because some ads are very colorful and kinda glorify vaping. That is the reason why I believe youth penalties shouldn't be included because sometimes kids make bad decisions and they regret it but they are so addicted that even if they tried to stop they couldn't. So punishing them for one mistake could lead them to just giving up on trying to be better. Also, sometimes kids fall to peer pressure which would be unfair to the kids that were forced to do it.

Please ensure us youth are safe by working to end the sale of flavored tobacco.

Braxton
Waipahu

2025 February 20

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I support HB756 because flavored tobacco products have had negative effects on people that I know.

I believe flavored tobacco products target kids because of the way they name the flavors of vapes. I have heard flavors like "Candy" or "Cotton Candy," which I believe could arouse the curiosity of the youth. I know multiple people, from my middle school to now as a high school student, who had and is still vaping. The only vape I had seen them with are flavored. It has affected others because I saw some friends who started to follow their bad habits.

In my personal experience of how tobacco products left a negative impact in my life, friendships I used to hold onto so dearly are broken because I chose not to follow their bad habits which lead to them thinking they needed a different friend group.

Nicotine addiction has a negative mark on my school community, those who vape or had used a vape seemed to always decline on their academics. I believe menthol flavors could be the reason why nicotine addiction is much higher than it needs to be, people I know seem to always use flavored vapes and never a bland or plain vape. That is why we need to end the sale of flavored tobacco products.

Clark Rivera
Aiea

02/20/2025

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I **fully support HB756** and hope to see that we can end the sale of flavored tobacco this legislative session.

Many of my family members are heavily addicted to cigarettes and vapes, which has become a daily habit for them. Initially beginning with flavored products, they are now hooked on it and have not been able to quit despite numerous attempts. Their addiction has drastically impacted their life and our family as they consistently use their products. Sadly, this story is not unique, as many others, especially young people, have fallen into the same cycle.

At our school, a large number of students are addicted to nicotine products, finding themselves using them daily. They leave class to use them and become more hooked the longer they use them. This addiction leads to constant agitation and an increasing dependency on these products, which heavily impacts their studies and futures. The prevalence of nicotine use among youth is alarming, and we must acknowledge the significant role flavored tobacco products play in this epidemic.

Flavored tobacco products clearly target youth through their marketing and product design. The use of fruity, candy-like, and dessert flavors appeals to younger demographics, making these products more enticing and masking the harshness of tobacco. For instance, flavors like "bubblegum," "blue raspberry," and "cotton candy" directly mimic the flavors of popular childhood treats. Advertisements often feature bright, playful colors and sleek packaging, resembling products meant for children rather than adults. This clever marketing only exacerbates the problem, drawing in more vulnerable individuals, especially teens.

In addition to the fruity flavors, menthol flavors should also be included in the ban because they are particularly harmful. Menthol's ability to mask the harshness of tobacco makes it easier for individuals, especially young people, to start smoking and much harder to quit. It enhances nicotine addiction and disproportionately affects youth and marginalized communities. Excluding menthol from the ban creates a loophole that perpetuates addiction and undermines public health efforts. Protecting all individuals, especially young people, requires a comprehensive ban on all flavored products, including menthol.

Many of my peers in high school have fallen into vaping, often due to the perceived harmlessness of flavored e-cigarettes. One particular friend started using mango-flavored vapes because it "tasted good" and didn't seem dangerous. Over time, their usage escalated, impacting their health and focus at school. They struggled with withdrawal symptoms when trying to quit, highlighting how addictive these products can be. Witnessing how a seemingly innocent habit turned into a dependency has only strengthened my belief that stricter regulations are necessary to prevent youth from becoming victims of nicotine addiction.

Finally, youth penalties should not be included in tobacco regulation bills, as they shift the responsibility away from the tobacco industry and onto the youth—many of whom are simply victims of targeted marketing and peer pressure. Penalizing youth discourages them from seeking help for their addiction and creates stigma, rather than addressing the root causes of the problem. Effective regulation should focus on holding tobacco companies accountable, providing education and support for young people, and

prioritizing prevention and rehabilitation over punishment. The goal should be to break the cycle of addiction and protect future generations from the harmful effects of tobacco.

Ciana Cooper
Kihei

Chair- Representative Yamashita
Vice Chair- Representative Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

I am writing in **support of HB756**. Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in the world. Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products would help change this.

A personal story I want to share is that my brother once had an addiction to nicotine in the form of a vape pen, mistaking it for something else. Like many others, he started with a flavored product. This addiction made him more aggressive, especially around me, as I was a consistent witness to his use of it. I often considered telling our parents, but I assumed he knew the consequences and continued anyway, driven by his addiction.

I frequently see kids sneaking away to get a hit, whether it's outside or even during class. Not all of them have poor academic performance, but that is more the exception than the rule—most of them do struggle academically. While I can't speak to how nicotine affects students in sports, I have seen many ads about it on YouTube. I don't often pay much attention to other students who use nicotine products or their relationships with others, but, like my brother, aggressiveness is certainly a common trait.

The presence of nicotine ads is undeniable. I've seen countless ads put out by resellers of nicotine products, often on social media—platforms that are deeply embedded in the lives of my generation. While I wouldn't necessarily blame individual businesses for targeting children, resellers play a significant role in the promotion of these products, and they still fall under the broader nicotine industry.

Menthol in certain products can make them more appealing or presentable, potentially drawing more people in. When marketed as something that makes it "easier" to use, menthol products could definitely attract younger children—whether they're curious about the world around them or already using nicotine products. This targeted appeal can be especially dangerous.

Though I have never used a tobacco or nicotine product myself, I have witnessed its effects on others. I personally can tolerate the choices people make, understanding that everyone has the right to make their own decisions. However, with that freedom, people often make choices they later regret. I've had to sever ties with people I thought were good friends.

Let's end the sale of flavored tobacco products so that we do not have to deal with all of these issues.

CJ
Aiea

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

I am in strong **support of passing HB756.**

The impact of nicotine addiction that I see in the students at my school and in my community is that they can't go long without nicotine in their hands. While it doesn't seem to affect their academics directly, it definitely affects their participation in sports. Smokers especially have a hard time breathing, which makes it much more difficult for them to perform in high-energy activities like sports.

Personally, I know many individuals who are addicted to tobacco products. Some of them started with flavored products, and I believe that's where the addiction begins. Others started smoking cigarettes at a young age, even as early as 13. Their addiction has caused a range of health issues, from breathing problems to, in some cases, even death.

I believe flavored tobacco products are specifically targeting kids. The way they're advertised makes them look cool and appealing. Although I haven't personally seen these ads, when I was working on my Girl Scout project to end vaping, I did a lot of research and found that these ads are designed to attract young people. The only tobacco-related ads I've seen lately are from survivors of smoking who regret their decision. These ads highlight why it's not worth smoking away your life, literally.

In my own life, many people I know smoke and vape. I always tell them that they shouldn't be using these products because of the damage they're doing to their bodies. Seeing the negative effects of addiction in people close to me has taught me to avoid tobacco products and to never go down that path because of the serious consequences.

Youth penalties should not be included in any tobacco regulation bills because it wouldn't be fair to target kids. Instead, the focus should be on getting rid of flavored tobacco products. By eliminating these flavors, we can prevent youth from starting to vape, getting hooked, or becoming addicted to tobacco in the first place.

Jordan Lopez

Aiea

Chair Yamashita
Vice Chair Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

I am testifying in strong support of HB756 because I know someone who became addicted to tobacco products, and they started with a flavored product. Their addiction impacted everyone around them because we were all concerned about how it could affect their future.

Nicotine use is very common in our community, and many people can't go too long without using it. Some students feel the urge to use nicotine during school, which distracts them from their learning. Additionally, nicotine use has a clear impact on participation in sports, as it affects the respiratory system, making physical activity more difficult. On top of that, these addictions can negatively affect relationships with family and friends. People worry about their loved ones, and the user's mood is often influenced by their addiction.

I've also seen many advertisements that clearly target kids. The flavored products they advertise are made to be appealing to a younger audience, and I've noticed that many ads use cartoons to promote these products, making it seem like using them is "cool."

Banning these flavored products is essential for the future. If so many young people are using them now, and influencing others to do the same, the long-term impact could be devastating. Once you start, it becomes much harder to quit, and that's something we need to prevent.

Alyssa Duro
Aiea

Chair Yamashita
Vice Chair Takenouchi
Members of the Committee

I am testifying in strong support of HB756.

I have seen firsthand how nicotine addiction affects people around me, including friends and family. The most notable case is my dad, who became addicted to smoking cigarettes. Doctors had recommended vapes as a “healthier” alternative, but now he’s just as dependent on his vape as he was on cigarettes. It’s like replacing one addiction with another, and it still has a negative impact on his overall health. Nicotine addiction also affects students in our school, causing many to skip classes or lose focus during lessons because they feel the constant need to take a hit. Despite our school’s ban on vaping, bathrooms still reek of artificial flavors, and we can’t fully stop the presence of vaping on campus. This is a clear sign that more needs to be done to address the issue.

Flavored tobacco products, in particular, are clearly targeting kids. The artificial flavors used—like those found in ice cream or candy—are designed to be appealing to my generation, making it seem like a fun or harmless activity. On top of that, these products are so easily obtainable for kids my age. Many never feel that purchasing them is wrong, and it’s not hard for them to find a way to get their hands on them. This is why I believe it’s so important to restrict the sale of flavored tobacco products. Eliminating these flavors removes a huge selling point that draws in young people. Without the appeal of sweet or fruity flavors, many of my peers may not be as easily influenced to try vaping, which could prevent addiction before it even starts.

Merry Lorhynne
Aiea

Chair Kyle Yamashita
Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi
& Members of the Committee on Finance

My name is Lillian Chau, a Sophomore attending Maui High School. I am writing to express my **strong support for HB756**. As a student pursuing the medical field and an active member of HOSA - Future Health Professionals, an organization that aims to empower individuals to become leaders in the global health community through education, collaboration and experience, I believe this bill is an important step towards protecting our youth from the dangers of nicotine addiction.

Flavored tobacco products, like e-cigarettes and menthol cigarettes, are specifically designed to attract young people. The sweet and fruity flavors mask the harsh taste of tobacco, making it easier for kids and teens to start using these products. The evidence is clear: By targeting young people with sweet, fruity, and minty flavors, the tobacco industry has effectively created a new generation of nicotine users, many of whom will face long-term health consequences as a result.

As a student, I have experienced first hand how the addiction of nicotine spreads throughout my peers. It starts with one student and by the end of the day, at least 2-4 students are asking to hit that same vape. Once addicted, it can be very hard to quit, which could affect their health, academic performance, and long-term well-being.

We have the power to make a real difference for the future of Maui. By supporting HB756, our youth can be protected from the harmful effects of tobacco and allow for our community to be in a healthier state. I truly believe this is an important step towards a brighter future, and I hope you will vote in favor of it.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Mahalo,
Lillian Chau
Maui High School

Chair Representative Yamashita
Vice Chair Representative Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

I am in **support of HB 756** due to the rise of youth nicotine addiction generally caused by the increased use of e-cigarette usage. Hawaii has made great strides to attempt to decrease the numbers by increasing the age of tobacco products to 21 years old and smoke-free car rides while keiki are present. As a recent college graduate, I've seen my peers fall victim to the appealing advertisement and usage of tobacco products, specifically the uprising of vape products like juul, elfbar, and many other products that are rapidly appearing. Hawaii's great efforts to reduce the usage and demand of tobacco products that have greatly affected my family, friends, and community can continue.

Together it is our kuleana to improve public health in our community by ending the sale of flavored tobacco products.

Alexis Cortes-Swanson
Aiea

2/19/2025

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I support HB756 and end the sale of flavored tobacco and prevent further harm to the youth that it has already affected.

There is no reason for a flavored tobacco product to be marketed as 'cotton candy' or 'bubble gum' when loli-pops and jelly beans, which are always directed towards children, have upheld that flavor to be of innocent reputation.

A personal story due to tobacco products is that I have a strained relationship with my uncle who has been a smoker for years, ever since I've known him really. When our family tried giving him a fresh start here on Hawai'i, with a promise that he'd quit, it wasn't easy figuring out that he hadn't exactly dropped the addiction, especially since my brother is a severe asthmatic. Many of my friendly relationships have been stained with the knowledge that my friends had fallen for this flavored-death gimmick because of how my uncle shaped my viewpoint on tobacco products. One example is one friend of mine was having a difficult time that she turned to vapes for comfort. I've only seen her at her lowest right when I think she's looking up. She's been missing school as her relationship with family and friends are impacted as well.

I do not want to see any more of my peers, family members, or friends suffer from the tobacco industry. It is time for a flavor ban.

Jazmine

Waipahu

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kaila'i a middle school student at Kamehameha Schools. I have seen that vaping is a problem in the community. For example I have seen family members smoke cigarettes and then transition to vaping. That has affected the person's mentality and the other people around them. Even when I was in elementary there were people who would vape and do that kinds of stuff and it would really effect their relationships. I think kids are easily influenced by some kids in their life because I have heard about people getting vapes and inviting people in the bathroom to vape with them. I think that if these vapes had no flavor nobody would buy them and that is why **I support HB756.**

Kaila'i

Wailuku

Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I support HB756 because I know people that have become addicted to tobacco and have started with a flavored product. In response, this has caused them to become very moody. It has also affected them emotionally and with their relationships with others.

The way that companies have been able to target kids is through advertisements with flavors that attract kids. Kids have been victim to harmful tobacco marketing. It encourages youth to try flavors and menthol products because it masks the harsh flavor of tobacco.

A personal experience I want to share is my sister is currently or used to be an cigarette user. This has caused her to be very angry and short tempered. I am sure that vaping was a coping mechanism. This is not healthy and I hope she finds the help that she needs.

I'm proud to support HB756, which seeks to end the sale of flavored tobacco.

Holly Taguma
Lihue

Chair Kyle Yamashita
Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

I support **HB756**. It's time for the state to take action and finally end the sale of flavored tobacco that is targeting us kids.

The reason I think we need the ban is because at my school, I see a lot of students who use nicotine almost daily. These are the type of students you see wanting to use the bathroom during class and they are skipping the period. I'm sure their grades are impacted by the way they choose to spend their time.

If we were to pass this bill, it would create a healthier world and allow students not to be corrupted or peer pressured. Just seeing those around me use tobacco products makes me feel uneasy... especially when it comes to second hand vape. I feel in danger just being around those who use it, even though I'm not the one using the product.

Kelsy K.
Kaneohe

Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I've seen that nicotine can cause a lot of my friends to become more short tempered and angry whenever they don't have their vape/cigarette. That is why I **support HB756**.

It has affected my community. For example, a couple of my friends liked to vape/smoke and they were introduced to it by other influences such as their own friends or family. I'm unsure if they started with a flavored product but they're addiction had them always wanting to vape/smoke whenever they could.

I've also seen multiple people that are my age selling vapes and flavored tobacco products online or during school/letting people borrow their products.

It is a really big problem and the solution is easy, end the sale of flavored tobacco products.

Kimiyo
Ewa Beach

2/20/2025

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I support **HB756** because every single day I see people who are vaping or smoking every single day because of a simple problem that we have in this world. This problem started in the 1900's where adults would start smoking tobacco which contained nicotine, this became an influence to the next generation and further on until people were having problems with their health.

So people started to look for an alternative which started the creation of the vape. This was supposed to be a healthier alternative to smoking tobacco. But later in the future, vaping became a health hazard not a healthier alternative. Then adults would vape in front of their kids, which would make them interested, making the kids steal or even illegally buy vapes and try it. Now kids these days would just vape and try to hide them and not tell a trusted adult or someone about their problem but instead they get hooked to something that is the most lethal way to die.

I know a bunch of people who smoke or vape. I even have some people that are close to me who vape in the same car or room as me and I hate it with a passion and I want them to stop and throw the vape away. Others get peer-pressured to just try it once but this could ruin a life for good. This is probably the worst way to die or live, since if you have to, have a tube in your throat for someone to breathe.

Royce Takara
Honolulu

Chair Yamashita

Vice Chair Takenouchi

Members of the Committee

I strongly believe that youth vaping must be stopped, that is why I **support HB756**. Think about it if a youth, someone like 15 or 16 years old, is vaping. That can lead to really bad consequences. Not only that, but vaping makes it harder for you to breathe too, which leads to worsened performance in sports. So many athletes have the talent and potential to excel in their sport, from football to basketball to track, but are held back by their vaping addiction.

I've seen the effects of nicotine addiction in my peers and there needs to be actions taken so that they are not affected anymore.

Derrick U.

Aiea

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

Smoking has really affected my family. My grandparents smoked for most of their lives, and it hurt their health. My dad, who was around them a lot, developed asthma. He had trouble breathing and needed medicine to help. This is one of the many effects of secondhand smoking. It has caused most of my family down the line to get asthma, like me. This is the reason that I **support HB756**.

Joshua M.
Honolulu

February, 2025

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I support HB756.

A personal experience with tobacco products is that my grandma started with vapes and she later on became addicted to cigarettes. Her addiction really impacts my family because overall the fact that she does it not only because it is unhealthy but it also affects everyone around her. In school, most students who vape here struggle with focus and concentration because of the nicotine cravings or withdrawal symptoms. It affects their participation in sports because most sports require drug tests. Tobacco products have also affected a friend I had completely. She started off with vapes and later on got addicted to hard core drugs like Xanax and I never saw her again.

I believe that flavored tobacco does target kids because they know kids would get addicted to flavors more easier than a adult would. Examples are the companies making like fruit flavors or bubblegum flavors which is stuff they know teens would love. I also think that it is very important that menthol flavors be included in the ban because it does not help what so ever, It only makes the addiction worse and harder to quit.

Furthermore, I support the Youth Council's stance that youth penalties should not be included in tobacco regulation bills because it is very unfair in punishing minors instead of addressing the real issue which we all know is the tobacco companies that specifically target the young radios because they know they are easier to get at. Penalizing young people can just make the issue worse and overall can lead to even more harmful consequences and make them not want to seek help.

Destiny R.
Honolulu

Chair: Representative Kyle Yamashita
Vice Chair: Representative Jenna Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

I support HB756.

My close friend's experience:

I started vaping a few years ago, thinking it would be a safer alternative to smoking. At first, I enjoyed the variety of flavors and the idea that it didn't come with the same immediate "stinky" smell that cigarettes do. But looking back now, I wish I had never picked up a vape.

The first problem I noticed was the constant irritation in my throat. I didn't think much of it at first, but over time, it became harder to breathe, and I was coughing a lot more than I ever did when I smoked cigarettes. I began feeling short of breath just after doing simple things like walking up stairs or going for a run, which was a huge red flag. I also started noticing that my mouth felt dry and coated all the time.

Then, I began to experience chest tightness—like a dull pressure in my chest that just wouldn't go away. It wasn't painful, but it was unsettling. I even went to a doctor to get checked out, and that's when I learned that vaping could irritate the airways and even contribute to a condition known as popcorn lung, which is essentially scarring of the lungs from inhaling certain chemicals in vape juice. While I didn't have that yet, the possibility made me realize how serious the effects could be.

The scariest part, though, was when I started feeling this general sense of fatigue and dizziness after vaping. It was like my body was trying to tell me that something was off. I also started noticing that my sense of taste and smell wasn't as sharp as it used to be. I could barely taste food as well, and when I tried to exercise, I felt slower and more sluggish.

Eventually, I decided to quit, but it wasn't easy. I had become dependent on the nicotine in the vape, and quitting led to headaches, irritability, and trouble focusing for a while. The cravings were intense, and I realized just how much I had relied on it to cope with stress or to feel more social in certain situations. But after a few months of cutting back, I felt so much better. My breathing improved, the chest tightness disappeared, and I could taste food again.

In hindsight, I wish I had never started vaping in the first place. It's easy to get caught up in the idea that it's just harmless fun or that it's less dangerous than smoking, but over time, the effects really start to add up. If you're considering vaping or already doing it, I hope my experience serves as a wake-up call to reconsider the risks before it's too late.

Ammon
Mililani

Chair Yamashita

Vice Chair Takenouchi

Members of the Committee on Finance

I support HB756 and I hope you will too.

In 2019, my father was given 6 months to live. He was diagnosed with heart failure and his future was not looking bright. He had been smoking and vaping since he was a teen. With not many other options, he quit vaping in hopes to lengthen his time on Earth. Today, in 20205, my father is still alive and well and has not turned back to vaping.

Based on my testimony, no other kids should be exposed to something like this.

Jolene

Ewa Beach

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kanoa, and today I stand before you as someone who was personally affected with problems resulting from vaping. Growing up in this wonderful state, I have always taken great pride in our island community, the culture, and the way of life. But there's a silent, growing danger affecting many of our young people and even adults: vaping.

Living in Hawaii, we are gifted with clean air, breathtaking landscapes, and a strong sense of ohana-a connectedness to each other that is unlike anywhere else. Our islands are a sanctuary, and to see that vaping is quietly invading this peaceful lifestyle pains me. Vaping may appear harmless, but as I have learned, it is anything but.

Like many, I started vaping under the impression it would be a much more harmless alternative to smoking. It didn't take long for me to realize just how wrong that was-how unhealthy and addictive it would be. The thought of inhaling chemicals, flavored or otherwise, might seem innocuous to one, but it's burning our lungs, our health, and our communities down around us.

Hawai'i is a place that cares deeply about our environment, our future, and our children. Vaping is poisoning not only our health but also the air that we breathe. It is a problem that continues to grow and is not affecting just those who vape but everybody around them. And if we don't take a stand now, we are putting in jeopardy the future of our people and our islands.

We must act now to protect the youth of Hawaii from this dangerous trend. Vaping is marketed as a fun, trendy activity, but the reality is that it leads to addiction, health issues, and it creates a false sense of security about nicotine consumption. What starts as a harmless puff can easily spiral into a lifelong struggle with addiction.

Hawaii has long been a leader in health and wellness for its residents. Let's continue that tradition by standing together against vaping. We owe it to our children, our families, and our beautiful islands to take this step toward a healthier future.

Please join me in supporting efforts to stop the spread of vaping in Hawaii and to protect the health of our people by passing HB756. Mahalo.

Kanoa
Honolulu

Chair Kyle Yamashita
Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

I support HB756 to reduce youth vaping because some of my friends and family smoke. Most of them started with a flavored product like my brother. His addiction has impacted him to be more short tempered, more stressed, and he tends to sleep less. Many of the tobacco companies have targetes us by making ads pop up on tiktok or insta.

Nazaria Kahinu

Kaunakakai

Chair Yamashita, Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I support and believe HB756 is a vital step in protecting youth from vaping.

I was always aware that tobacco use my age was a huge problem. It never really hit home, until my best friend from elementary school started getting involved in a lot of tobacco products. From when she started, the impact vapes had on her was very visible. Her personality changed, she was strongly addicted, and wouldn't ever leave places without it. She kept on edging me on trying it, but nothing I said would make her stop trying to convince me. Because of this, I was tired and she was putting our friendship at risk. I tried my best to stop it, but I didn't want to be surrounded with that influence so I dropped our friendship of almost 9 years. A lot of the people I'm closet to still to it to this day my cousin being one of them. She's heavily into the use of vapes, and as of a number of years ago, she went into the hospital. She was using vapes so much it impacted her appetite, and she didn't end up eating for a long time. This caused her to drop a huge unhealthy amount of weight and had to be imported into the hospital for it. She's okay now, but I never realized how much I'm surrounded by this problem of tobacco use.

Haley

Honolulu

Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee:

I **support HB756** because vaping and smoking has caused many problems in our community. It causes more deaths than car crashes, homicides, and other deaths. Vaping companies targets young people to purchase their items because it is easier for the companies to sell it to them. This is a problem because even kids as young as third to fourth grade has been caught vaping. The biggest problem is within high schoolers, because they think it will help cause their problems. Like school, stress relief and so much more. Vaping causes stress, mood swings, and memory loss, which is a big problem because when we lose those things we also lose our sense of self. I stand with HB756 as it seeks to prevent youth vaping.

E'kela Suan

Ewa Beach

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

My name is Kekahupono Kong, and I am testifying today **in support of HB756** to increase measures to reduce and eventually end tobacco use here in Hawaii. As a caring resident who takes the health and future of our islands seriously, I urge your immediate and necessary action to take care of and protect our community, especially the keiki (children) and our kupuna (elders), from tobacco's harms.

Tobacco use continues to be among the leading preventable causes of death and disease in Hawaii, causing lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, and a host of other chronic conditions that take an overwhelming toll on individuals, families, and our healthcare system. Anti-smoking campaigns and other efforts over the years have raised awareness and cut smoking rates, but tobacco products-menthol cigarettes and e-cigarettes-particularly target the most vulnerable members of our society, including our youth.

I have seen the devastation that tobacco addiction can cause in individuals and families. It is not only the smoker who suffers but also everybody exposed to secondhand smoke-from the youngest child to the elderly-who are then placed at risk for many health problems. We cannot afford to ignore the impact that tobacco has on the overall well-being of our community.

Hawaii has always taken pride in being one of those states that truly take care of the health and wellbeing of its residents. From banning smoking in public areas to implementing a tobacco-free campus, Hawaii has led by example in the fight against diseases caused by tobacco. But we can do more. We can keep pushing the pace, from tougher regulations to higher tobacco taxes, better access to proven cessation programs that help people quit for good.

I urge you to take bold and concrete action in making Hawaii a continuing good place for people to live long and healthy lives. Let's make our state tobacco-free, one where our children and future generations can breathe in clean air, without the notion of continuous fear regarding illnesses caused by tobacco, and grow up in a community concerned with their health and safety.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to creating a healthier, tobacco-free future for all Hawaiians. HB756 is a vital piece of legislation that will fight youth vaping.

Mahalo,
Kekahupono Kong
Mililani

Chair Yamashita
Vice Chair Takenouchi
Members of the Committee

I support HB756 because it would allow Hawaii to expand their efforts to curb youth vaping by regulating tobacco sales more effectively.

I know many people that have become addicted to vapes from flavored products. How it impacted other people is that they have lots of mood swings and just have been acting differently. I see that they also fall asleep in class all the time. Also they are not focused in class or anything for that matter.

The tobacco industry is marketing to kids because we see flavors like strawberry, grape, chocolate thinking its just like candy and that it won't impact them in any way. Why it is important is because it's the gateway of starting vaping and just getting the feel of it and then getting into many other products.

Thea Lazaro
Ewa Beach

Chair Representative Yamashita
Vice Chair Representative Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

I **support HB756** to help end the youth vaping seen in the community.

This has affected me because my older sister vapes, I am not sure when she started, but it was probably back when she was in high school. She uses a flavored one. She has been more distant from me and my family and she has been wanting to go out all the time, sometimes not coming back for more than a day. I believe more flavored products are targeting kids because I have not seen my sister or the people I know who vape without a flavored bar.

I also see that students' grades are dropping and students are not focused in school, they do not come to school to learn anymore. Most of the people I know that vape do not really play sports anymore, or quit the sport they played. Their relationships with their families I am not aware of, but they are more close with the people who influenced them to vape.

It is important to ban these products because it is killing people, it is affecting our relationships with people, and our education is decreasing. I support HB756 because it will combat youth vaping.

Avalee
Ewa Beach

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members of the Committee,

I support HB756 because it takes action against youth vaping.

It's a growing concern in Hawaii, seeing that flavored vapes are designed to attract younger users. Flavors such as mango, strawberry, and cotton candy are especially alluring to teenagers, making their addiction to the habit much easier. A survey conducted showed 18.7% percent of Hawaii high school students say they used an e-cigarette, and the majority of youth users reported using a flavored product. This trend is also alarming because, with such ways of marketing for these products directly targeting kids, it makes trying to avoid the addiction to nicotine even more difficult.

Nicotine exposure in these ages has long-lasting effects, especially on developing brains. With the prevalence of teen e-cigarette usage in Hawaii, it is a measure to reduce the death toll. In fact, every 6 seconds, somebody dies from a smoking-related disease in the world. Research also has found that young people who vape are more likely to smoke cigarettes as they get older, leading to other risks for them later in their lives. This will protect the youth of Hawaii from these products and prevent health problems and addiction in the future.

Kaua Aqi

Kapālama

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I **support HB756** because it tackle the youth vaping epidemic effectively.

When I was in high school, I watched one of my closest friends struggle with a vaping addiction. It started as something small—just trying flavors with friends—but quickly turned into something they couldn't stop. They would get anxious and irritable without their vape, sneaking hits between classes and even spending money meant for other things just to keep buying pods.

What was most heartbreaking was how hard it was for them to quit. They tried multiple times, but the addiction was stronger than they expected. Schools talk about the dangers of vaping, but so many students still fall into the trap because of the appealing flavors and easy access. If flavored tobacco products weren't available, I truly believe my friend might never have started.

This is why I support banning flavored tobacco and focusing on prevention rather than punishing youth. We need to hold the tobacco industry accountable for targeting young people and ensure that future generations don't go through the same struggle. This includes banning menthol. Menthol masks tobacco's harshness, making it more addictive and appealing, especially to youth and marginalized groups. Banning it helps reduce smoking rates, prevent addiction, and save lives.

Ryley Oming

Pearl City

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee

I **strongly support HB756** which will reduce youth vaping. People that I knew are smokers and due to this I am no longer friends with them. They were hooked and it is genuinely a gross and much overlooked and accepted habit. I had a friend and we had a sleepover and the whole time I was there she was vaping near feet from me and did not peer pressure me into trying but she would hide her vape in a stuffed animal she had ripped open and this made me automatically leave.

Also, youth penalties should not be included in tobacco regulation bills because they change the blame to young people instead of holding the tobacco industry accountable. These measures discourage youth from seeking help for addiction and disproportionately impact marginalized communities. A public health approach focused on education, prevention, and cessation support is more effective in reducing youth tobacco use.

Pueoonamakaokahai

Haleiwa

Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi, and Members of the
Committee on Finance

I support HB756 because it takes action and prevents youth vaping!

Someone I care about is addicted to tobacco products, specifically cigarettes. He's been smoking at least 2 a day since I remember, and although he's getting better now, me and all of my cousins can remember the smell of smoke that always lingers in his truck. Menthol has to be included because the person I care about has been addicted for all these years to menthol. They made him feel safe and healthy while smoking, even as he destroyed his own lungs and robbed us of years of his life. Some of the side effects that I have seen due to vaping are a lot of people who get a lot moodier, angrier, and more desperate because of their addiction, especially when they're looking for where to get their next hit.

Unfortunately, flavored products target kids. My cousin, for instance, started vaping because there was a cotton candy flavor, and before they knew it they were addicted. Now, they're way more stressed, way more sickly, and they're always worried about hiding it from their parents. Youth are the victims here, being targeted by evil companies who only want to profit from keeping kids addicted. Giving us harsher penalties will only push us away, and will discourage those who are addicted to seek help.

Kamakoa Kaluhiwa
Kāne'ohe

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

I support HB756.

As someone concerned about public health, I believe that flavored nicotine products, including e-cigarettes and vapes poses risks to children and should be banned. These products are marketed in flavors such as cotton candy, fruit punch, and bubblegum, used to lure young people. These flavors make it more appealing, particularly for children who may not yet grasp the dangers of nicotine addiction.

Nicotine is an extremely addictive substance that carries serious health risks. Research indicates that young kids are more likely to be addicted, and exposure to nicotine can have bad effects to the body. By allowing easy access to flavored nicotine products, we risk many people that may struggle with lifelong nicotine addiction.

Kekuaokalani Paik

Kāne'ohe

Chair
Vice Chair
Members of the Committee

Some people that I know that are involved in sports use vapes. They all use flavored products and they always are doing it in secret, I always see them but they are so addicted it is hard to go against them. They talk about getting caught and seem very anxious and twitchy. It is not considered "cool" to smoke tobacco, but when it is Guava Ice, or Blueberry Faygo, all of a sudden, it is the new best thing. My friends or people I know in the locker room brag about a new flavor every week.

A guy in the locker room got caught by security. He was on varsity and he is a really impactful player, getting caught is the worst thing that could happen to him and his team. Kids should not be ruining their life because they are the ones that are being intentionally targeted by flavors. They are kids. I don't want my future daughter, son, nephew, niece to get addicted to flavors. I support HB756, there is a problem and it should be addressed.

Justice Slade
Waimanalo

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I'm here to express my deep concerns about the continued availability of fruity juice and menthol vape flavors. While these products are often promoted as a safer alternative to traditional smoking, they pose a significant risk to our youth. The sweet, candy-like flavors are intentionally designed to attract young people, and it's clear that they have become a gateway for nicotine addiction among minors.

The fruity and menthol flavors make these products far more appealing to children and teenagers who may not fully understand the long-term health consequences of nicotine use. These products may seem harmless, but they carry serious risks of addiction that can affect a young person's health and future.

The availability of these flavored vapes is a growing problem, and it's crucial that we take action now to prevent further harm. Many young people who would never have considered smoking are now using vapes because they are drawn to the sweet flavors. This isn't just about personal choice—it's about protecting the health of future generations.

I, as a highschool student, know people that have used vapes, and I know how they get it. I also know how they have changed after using it and it's honestly sad seeing how much my friends change over the past few years. This is a real issue like anything else and it should stop.

Mahalo,
Lulu

Chair Yamashita
Vice Chair Takenouchi
Members of the Finance Committee

I support HB756 for efforts to address youth the youth vaping epidemic. In middle school, my friend said she started because her friend asked her to try it. After trying it once she found herself constantly meeting people in the bathroom so she could try again. It felt really weird to her and it burned, but it was so addicting that she could not stop. She kept meeting with the same people in the same bathroom in order to try it again.

I see everyone constantly using nicotine in order to feel happier or in order to just get through the day without having to deal with it themselves. I definitely feel as if this affects their ability to perform at their highest capacity because of the limiting effects of nicotine. Since students are young, they don't have the ability to make informed decisions, so they start to learn that vaping or ingesting nicotine is the only way they can be happy, which is completely incorrect.

I personally don't use or have ever used vape or any tobacco products, however a lot of the ones around me vape a lot and they tell me how it impacts and affects their schoolwork and how they think on a daily basis. One of my friends would act out of line and irrational and blame it on the fact that he was addicted. Additionally, some of my friends would offer it to me because they believed that everyone should get addicted eventually. This is probably how the use of tobacco spreads throughout high schoolers.

Kai Suliven
Ewa

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

I am a soccer player and I have seen several of my teammates struggle with an addiction to vaping. Unfortunately, most of these people are still addicted to this day. Some of my teammates will joke about their favorite flavors and compare them to real food that we eat. This has affected others because my teammates have encouraged and influenced others to start. I've noticed that my teammates who do have a vaping addiction tend to be more out of shape, and easily tired throughout games or practices. A good teammate of mine recently began vaping after quitting for a year. Last season was the first time that I had played with her. We were always first together on our runs and were known as the most in shape. This season, I've noticed that she has fallen behind and is no longer in the front when we do conditioning. I believe this is caused by vaping. Because some of my teammates vape, I try my best to not surround myself with them outside of my sport. This past year, I was in Big Island for a soccer tournament with my team. When we returned home from a game, myself and two of my teammates were hanging out in a guest house alone. One of my teammates pulled out her vape and they both began using it. They began peer pressuring me into using it. I pushed them away and said "No, do not ever ask me again". I knew that even if I wasn't smoking it myself, being around the smoke was just as bad.

My peers have been using flavored tobacco that is why I believe that tobacco flavored products are targeting kids. I have seen small pop ups at the mall where young adults are selling vapes that are packaged like toys and candy. I also think that menthol products should be included in the ban because if it is not, tobacco addictions will not decrease. Please **support HB756**. We need to address this problem that we are seeing everywhere.

Shelby Aoki

Ewa Beach

Chair Yamashita

Vice Chair Takenouchi

Members of the Committee on Finance

I **support HB756** because I see some kids at my school doing it, and it impacts my community. It makes it awkward when you see someone doing it but you don't wanna be a snitch and tell on them. I think it affects their academics because instead of going to class and learning, they are in the bathroom with their friends vaping. I think it also affects their sports and activities because they could become unmotivated and find comfort in their vape. Lastly, I think it does impact their relationships with the people in their life because it can change the way they act and cause them to push away and not wanna be around others.

I think flavored products definitely do target kids because kids are attracted to sweets and the fruity flavors so it makes them more intrigued to try it. For example, flavors like blue raspberry or cotton candy they're gonna think like sweets or candy which makes them tempted.

Seeing the stories of others around the world and also seeing people in my own life that mean a lot to me partake in these things makes me sad because you know it's only doing bad things to them and that if they keep doing it, they are only gonna get worse and worse until they die. I think the biggest thing for me that makes me stay away is imagining if it was my own kid.

Maya Akau

Kailua, Kona

Chair Kyle Yamashita
Vice Chair Jenna Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

I support HB756 because vaping is a big, overtaking problem in our lives today, and will probably get worse if we don't stop it as soon as possible. I've seen my friends slowly drift away from their old-selves and get addicted towards vaping. They've been skipping their sport practices and hanging with the wrong types of people. I've also seen their mental health decrease as well. Many kids in my school that I know are involved with nicotine suffer in their academics. They usually get bad grades and slack off. I've noticed that they usually have no energy for sports anymore and keep to themselves. They use flavors that we grew up with. For example, Hawaiian Pog, Aloha Sun, and other Hawai'i oriented flavors have impacted students that I personally know.

Antelise Porter

Captain Cook , Hawai'i

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance

I support HB756.

My friend from my old school on Big Island first started vaping in sixth grade and throughout the rest of the time we were there he continued to do it, always saying that he was gonna stop and that he wasn't doing it anymore but he was. He would always say how he could feel his lungs hurting while at soccer practice because of the vape. My first time I got offered a vape was when I was in fifth grade. Luckily, I said that I didn't want to do it and didn't get pressured into trying it but that experience has stuck with me since. It makes me wonder where I would be if I had taken a hit that day and gotten addicted. Where would my life be like right now if I started vaping that day?

Kainoa Keliipio

Kealakekua, HI

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I support HB756 because in middle school I would say about 70% of my friends used vapes. They would talk about the flavors that they had such as fruit flavors or juices and to them they talked about it as if it was some type of candy. By them talking about the flavors they were vaping it caught the interest of others who wanted to try it and ended up becoming addicted to vaping. Nicotine impacted the way that they operated. It made their grades drop, their emotions to become jumpy in a way, and they didn't like participating in the things that they normally loved doing.

I believe that flavored tobacco products are targeting kids because of the flavors they are selling. If you truly think about it, cotton candy, fruit punch, and more all attract the youth more than it would with adults. Kids see a flavor that they are used to and they think that it's not as bad because they know how it tastes already, leading them to keep buying more and more which eventually leads to them becoming addicted. I also think that youth penalties shouldn't be included because it would only cause youth to become more sneaky and find other alternatives to counter that.

I urge you to end the sale of flavored tobacco so that the youth can move forward.

Alea Bishop
Kapolei

Chair Yamashita
Chair Takenouchi
Members of the Committee

I support HB756.

Flavors are targeting kids, because I have never seen an adult smoke a cotton candy vape before and that is what the kids smoke. I support HB756 because I want some of my friends I lost to vaping back

Kekona Bactad-Barretto

Kapa'a

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I **support HB 756** for the end of flavored and menthol tobacco products so that less people are exposed to tobacco, specifically young people. Tobacco companies target youth because bright packages draw youth attention. AND it is not their fault when you're a teen it's easier to just do things and agree with people because your frontal lobe is not fully developed. There should not be a punishment for the youth because it's the society that is influencing us.

Kulia Cabrera-Zuke

Honolulu

Committee on Finance,

I support HB756 that ends the sale of flavored tobacco products in the communities.

AJ Vasper

Kapolei

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the
Committee on Finance

I support HB756 to stop the sale of flavored tobacco because we
want to see those changes take place.

I believe flavored tobacco is targeting kids, companies try to entice
kids with flavors they know well and enjoy. Kids get hooked on the
product because of the flavors. It is important because that would
be the only way kids would stop using products. If you got rid of
the flavors then kids would not enjoy it anymore and they would
stop. I know kids that had an addiction to tobacco products and it
has affected their whole family. Their families have tried to help
and do all that they can. It has definitely brought some families
farther apart.

Lia Peterson

Honolulu

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members,

I support HB756.

I know people who vape. I have seen how it affects how they look, how they talk, their attitude, and just their outward appearance. I have heard people say that it can make things worse with their relationships and academics. I've also seen people on the sidewalks smoking and they look grumpy. We should get rid of these nasty habits and have a tobacco free generation.

N/A

Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Chory Takenouchi, and Members,

I support HB756 because I think that the flavored tobacco products are targeted to kids. I think this because they package and sell very bright and good sounding flavors such as strawberry watermelon and so on. Menthol is another one of the big reasons people get addicted to tobacco products because it makes vaping and smoking easier on your throat even though it has the same side effects.

Tayvien Garcia

Waimanalo

Chair Yamashita
Vice Chair Takenouchi
Member of the Committee on Finance

I support HB756. I think minors using tobacco products is a problem in our community and we should be able to prevent it. If our own leaders won't stop this horrible thing, why shouldn't we?

I know a few people who vape. They started with a flavored product and still use flavored products. I think their addictions make them more dependent on these things to make them happy. When they can't have them, they're constantly thinking about vaping and talking about it whether it be to me or posting it on social media. I think their mental health isn't as good either, which is also because of things outside of vaping but can be because of the nicotine/chemicals. From what I've heard it can definitely make their time at school worse due to things like detention or suspension. These can lead to not being able to do sports, or even getting kicked out of school which would go on their record and possibly make things harder for them in the future. Also, I would think the nicotine would mess with their ability to think clearly, which would probably affect how they work in school. It doesn't really affect their friendships, since most of them are doing it too, but they're families usually don't know and I think that if they did it might change how much the kid used it.

I believe flavored tobacco products are targeted to kids. I think that adults would be fine with just the regular tobacco taste and the fact that the flavors they put out are definitely more of things like candy or juice instead or more adult things, they're trying to get kids lured into wanting to try a vape. A lot of the flavors are foods/drinks that many children enjoy rather than adults and I know a lot of kids who have said they wanted to try a vape because of the flavor it had. It's important to me because it's honestly sad seeing kids that I know and are my age ruining their life in a way because they want to "be cool" or just because they wanted to try it. The flavors are definitely a main reason some kids are getting hooked onto vapes and tobacco products so I hope this ban will at least lessen the amount of kids my age and maybe even younger from wanting to try smoking.

My best friend used to vape and I feel like it changed her a bit. We weren't as close at the time she was doing (she has stopped since then) but from what I would here she was a lot meaner to others and kind of relied on it to make her happy. I don't know exactly why she did it; I think it was to gain attention and look cool to others. I'm glad she realized the harmful effects of these things but she's now one month clean of not doing any of that.

The youth wouldn't be using these products in the first place if our government would stop making it able for companies to target them. No amount of money is worth children using these products and ruining their health and potential to grow. Giving youth penalties would just be cruel, as if them using these products wasn't harmful enough. If they really wanted to make a difference they would stop letting kids buy these products in the first place. Instead of thinking about penalties to give the kids, maybe they should work on redoing their marketing so that children wouldn't want to buy these products at all.

Kaila Biolos
Aiea

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I completely support HB756. Removing the masks of harsh chemicals like nicotine and menthol is vital to showing what these products actually are, and is key to improving public health because the citizens of Hawai'i will no longer be fooled from false marketing that threaten their health.

I strongly believe that the marketing that these companies use are intended to get kids addicted. The local flavors we all know and love are being pasted on deadly chemicals that damage the bodies of adolescence and change their behavior. Although I have not had a first hand account with tobacco products are know someone close to me that are using, I am concerned for our lāhui and want to work to prevent the 1,400 deaths per year due to tobacco use in our islands, especially amongst keiki.

Furthermore, menthol makes consuming tobacco easier and pleasant. The chemical makes the air cool and light, making addiction more dangerous because it is harder to quit a pleasing substance. Menthol makes up ~80% of the tobacco products used by Native Hawaiians, this is concerning because our lāhui is less likely to quit with menthol.

It is not youth that should be penalized for the intentional false marketing made by tobacco companies, their intentions are out of greed and the youth of Hawai'i should be protected by the State of Hawai'i. Kids don't know of the 2000 chemicals and more than 30 carcinogens that they are putting into their bodies. Education is one part of this journey, but we need the support of our government to enforce bills that penalize tobacco companies, and that restrict their influence on youth. The keiki of our state need their government to protect them with the authority they have, and do their job in improving the public health of our state.

'Ānelani

Honolulu

Chair Rep. Yamashita
Vice Chair Rep. Takenouchi
Members of the Committee on Finance

I support HB756. Here is why:

I have had countless friends, especially on big island become addicted to vaping. Even most of my family members, some of my kumu and more. Its become so normalized throughout the public and without much talk about the effects. They did start with a flavored product and it was vapes. Their addiction made them "fein" for vapes all the time, got them in trouble at school and even uncontrollable coughing.

In my new school, girls will share their vapes but it started drama where girls would snitch on each other to get back at someone they're mad at. Many of my friends had almost gotten kicked out of this school because of dumb decisions like vaping. Getting kicked off their volleyball team after getting warning but getting yelled at instead of getting help. Another one of my friends got kicked out of his house and lived at his friends house because he chose smoking over family. He couldn't manage to quit.

I believe flavored tobacco products are targeting kids. Around parties I always see the babys reaching for the colored vapes or lost Mary's. Especially making the vapes look less intimidating than they are by making them sound like a cool drink. It makes you think "Oh it can be that bad, vapes are just harmless flavored air like juice." Then you consider it, try it, and get hooked.

I know most of my friends only smoke for the flavors and taste. If the flavors are banned it would save their life. They'd almost guarantee quit and save so much money and not be couging all the time like how they do. My friends do want help and they've asked me but its hard when these companies make it so easy to get hooked with these flavors everyone loves. if they could only taste the true toxins in vapes they'd never hit one again. I love my friends and I want them to live a long happy life I dont want to be at there funeral earlier than I have to be because of a dumb preventable mistake that could have been prevented.

Im confident in myself and know vaping is wrong but there were a couple times where I've considered trying it. Thinking it couldn't be that bad for me and nobody would ever know. Almost every day at my old school I'd get asked if I wanted to hit their vape, and it was hard because I was the only one in my friend group who didn't do it and honestly it was tempting at times. People have called me names for not vaping and blown their smoke in my face trying to get me to do it or buy vapes from them. Plus it so easy to get I could ask any of my friends from big island to hit their vape, someone could buy it for me, or there are kids who supply vapes and make so much money off it.

As a kid its hard to surpass things like peer pressure. Kids don't stand on their ethics and morals because they don't know who they are as people. Sure they've made bad decisions but they need help not punishment. Support from lawmakers is needed to create a happy life.

Malia

Kona

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I support HB756. Ending the sale of flavor tobacco will decline the rate of vapes in kids. It is important to me that menthol flavors be included in the ban for both e-cigarettes and other tobacco products because then percentage of teens dying from tobacco will go down because I feel teens only buy it because of the menthol and flavors.

John Hayashida

Kapolei

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the
Finance Committee

I support HB756.

I have seen the effects of vaping, it affects people mentally
and they become depressed and unstable. The motivation for
doing it comes from the flavors. We need to address this
problem.

Callie Onishi

Kāneʻohe

Representative Yamashita, Representative Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

I support HB756 to end the sale of flavored tobacco. Nicotine addiction has affected students at my school and I know that it causes so much damage to your life and well-being.

One of my friends was addicted to vaping and I am not sure if she quit. She uses flavored products and honestly it was really scary to be around her when she was vaping. She would cry without realizing it and start to act delirious, then all of a sudden fall asleep. At first, I didn't know why she was acting this way but when I found out it was due to vaping, I was really concerned for her safety.

I think that it is unacceptable that the tobacco industry targets kids while knowing that it can cause so much harm to their development and lives. Get rid of flavors, it is damaging my generation.

Chloe Colandrea
Mililani

*Chair Kyle Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and Members
of the Committee,*

*Our native language is dying, we are losing a lot of native
Hawaiians to menthol tobacco and flavors because of the
deceiving taste. I support HB756 because when I'm an adult
I don't want my kids to be lured with weird flavors.*

*Iraia Manumaleuna
Honolulu*

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I support HB756 because if you look at the flavoring at a bunch of the vapes they're all fruity, and kid-based packages. We need to protect keiki not give them tobacco.

Some of my old friends used to vape. We were in 8th grade, though they started around 6th or 7th. They started with flavored products. They became a lot more distant, and a bit more crazy. I noticed I had to drop many of my friends because they kept trying to pressure me to start vaping with them. This should not be happening and adding more stress to our lives, we need to fix this problem.

Layla Burgess

Waiana'e

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the
Committee,

I **support HB756**. I've seen tobacco impact kids mental states as in anxiety, anger, sadness, etc. I feel like it tends to affect their grades too because they tend to mainly want to smoke and don't feel the need to do work, making them distracted. From sports friends and family too.

Alohaonālani Grabow
Pearl City

Members of the Committee on Finance

I support HB756 because I know people who have become addicted with smoking and they all started with a flavored vape.

Luveahlani Lacaden

Kapaa

Chair Yamashita

Vice Chair Takenouchi

Members of the Committee

My name is Danielle Rego and I am from Waipahu and I support HB756 because it is a step forward to stop youth vaping. This will help keep our youth safe. A majority of my friends from Waipahu are addicted and can't "live" without their vape. One of my closest friends has started vaping since she was 11 (2020) and hasn't been able to go 2 days without it since. I'm afraid for her health and future. Kids fiend for nicotine. Flavored nicotine products will kill this generation.

Danielle

Waipahu

To: Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance

I'm in support of HB756. HB756 is needed to help prevent youth vaping. Flavor tobacco affects primarily kids because there's many commercials and these products are packaged in colorful ways and advertisements to target the young youth.

Ahlexia Valdez

Wai'anae

February, 2025

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance

I am in strong support of HB756. I am a Maui student in high school, and I have seen many older kids vape in the bathroom or in the hallways outside class. I've even seen this in kids younger than me, which is even more concerning.

I think it is important to ban flavors because that's what gets us addicted. I've personally heard my friends talk about vape flavors and which flavors they love the most.

Even though our government has done some things to stop young people from smoking, they still need to stop the people who are selling vapes to us kids. Please ban flavors so the people selling them to us have to stop.

Talia David

Wailuku, Maui

Feb 19, 2025

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance

I've seen a lot of teens on tiktok getting hospitalized due to high intakes of nicotine. Because of how vapes are commercialized and the fun flavors being released, teens are interested and get addicted without knowing the consequences until it's too late and something happens.

That's why I support HB756. Action must be taken to prevent anymore teens getting really sick or dying from vaping. Please pass HB756 and keep us safe.

Christiane Ernestine Almosara
Aiea, Hawaii

February 20, 2025

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance

My mom told me a story about someone she knew who would vape and they were trying to charge the device while holding it in their pocket. Since it was in their pocket the combined heat generated from body heat, the device, and the pants rubbing on the device caused it to explode in his pocket. This left him with a mark that was maybe the size of a silver dollar on his leg. Since then, I knew that vaping was dangerous.

Besides physical danger, vaping is also very harmful to our health. Nicotine addiction is affecting students at my school by giving them weaker lungs. They aren't able to run as long as they would be which cuts their potential drastically. Menthol makes it so that the inhales are deeper. This means that the exposure to the vape chemicals is longer and therefore has more effect on the person. This just gives them prolonged exposure to the tobacco and whatever else may be in it.

There are some people that I know who have become addicted to vaping. It started with a flavored product due to the fact that it was everywhere in intermediate school. Their addiction impacted others because it made them think it was cool and they wanted to fit in and so others got addicted to it too. I also believe that it affects their relationships with family and friends because it makes them have to hide things from their parents. And if their friends aren't into vaping then the person might go and hang out with people who are into it.

Therefore, it is important for our government to ban flavors in vapes.

I also believe that youth penalties should not be included due to the fact that there are a lot of youth that do not have jobs, nor are they the legal age to go to prison. So I believe that the penalty should be put onto the parents in order to show the child that their actions can affect other people besides themselves. I think it should especially be the parents because it would be someone they see everyday and someone close to them as well.

Davon Dickerson
Aiea, Hawaii

Feb. 20, 2025

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the
Committee on Finance

Youth penalties should not be included in any bills because young people are still in a process of development, both emotionally and cognitively. Penalizing youth in legislation can lead to long term negative consequences, these can include stigmatization and limited opportunities for rehabilitation.

Instead of focusing on punitive measures, we should make sure to prioritize education, support, and alternatives that help young individuals learn from their mistakes and grow rather than just punish them. By not including harsh penalties, we can foster a more inclusive and forgiving society that offers second chances and believes in the potential of our youth in Hawaii.

Please pass HB756 and end the sale of flavored tobacco products!

Estrella Valenzuela
Aiea, Hawaii

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the
Committee on Finance

The issue is crystal clear: vaping is terrible and it has to stop.

I see a lot of Hawaii kids vaping and it really hurts their health. Lawmakers need to help by taking away the factors that cause kids to vape: flavors and easy access. By banning flavored vapes and stopping the hundreds of shops from selling them, kids will stop vaping.

Therefore, I strongly support HB756, which will enable the decline of youth vaping.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Cole Kusumoto
Honolulu, Hawaii

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the
Committee on Finance,

I see vaping everywhere in my school and community. It makes me upset to see the impact that vapes have on my peers. I notice that many of them struggle academically, and those that were partaking in sports have stopped. There are tangible impacts on their health and intellect, and it is extremely concerning.

Furthermore, I've noticed that many of my peers use flavored vape products. I have seen soda and juice flavors, which are obviously appealing to youth. Menthol has been around forever, and, in addition to these artificial flavors, it makes it very easy for kids my age to get hooked on vaping.

Too many lives have already been affected. Our government has to act now to stop this, so that's why I am in strong support of HB756.

Jaron Kaopua
Mililani, Hawaii

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance

My name is Makoa, and I am a student at Kamehameha schools. I have seen the impact that vaping has on my friends and peers, and it is not good. The most important impact is that people become more distant. I think this happens because vaping is so addictive, that you have to do it multiple times a day. Students have to do it in isolation because it is against campus rules to vape, and they want to avoid the punishment for getting caught. However, that means you're also isolating yourself from your friends and other students all the time, which hurts your social life.

Having a good social life is important because it supports our emotional development, helps build lasting friendships, and boosts confidence and self-esteem. These are all vital for our future. Also, having a good social life helps provide stress relief. I can see that my classmates who vape are stressed out all the time, and their addiction to vaping isn't helping them.

I support HB756 and I hope that you will pass it to help us youth out.

Makoa Dwight

Kailua, Hawaii

Feb. 18, 2025

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee on Finance,

I support HB756. As a student, I often see people vaping in the bathrooms. It makes me feel uncomfortable and, truthfully, I am intimidated when I see vapers linger in and around the bathrooms. Something I've noticed about the vapers is that they use flavored vapes, which all have colorful covers and wrapping. The designs definitely draw you in, which is why it's important that flavored vapes are banned. Let's take action and ban flavored vapes, I stand in support of HB756.

Peyton Lee
Honolulu, Hawaii

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the
Committee on Finance,

My classmates and I actively use social media, and unfortunately, many influencers show off their vapes. It is very easy to follow what other people do, especially if they are popular. That's why it is important to ban flavored vapes, so youth cannot access them. Also, vapes contain nicotine and/or other addicting chemicals, leading to a number of health issues such as gum disease. Vaping is a widespread problem in Hawaii, and the government has to take action now. I strongly support HB756.

Rylan Tandal
Waialua, Hawaii

Date: February 19, 2025

To: The Honorable Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
The Honorable Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

Re: **Support for HB756 HD2**, Relating to Health

Hrg: Friday February 21, 2025 at 2:00 pm via Videoconference Conference Room 308

Aloha House Committee on Finance,

As a parent, community member and healthcare professional I am writing in **strong support of HB756 HD2**, which prohibits the sale of flavored nicotine products and nicotine product flavor enhancers and the mislabeling of e-liquids as nicotine free; establishes penalties for violations; authorizes the Department of Health to appoint, commission, or contract for services of inspectors; establishes positions; and, appropriates funds.

Hawai'i is in the eighth year of a youth vaping epidemic in which 13.2% of all Hawai'i high school students, 33% of Native Hawaiian high schoolers and 27.9% of Pacific Islander high school students report "current use" of e-cigarettes. Additionally, 10.3% of all Hawai'i middle school students report using e-cigarettes.

Flavored products are driving this epidemic, where 85% of youth e-cigarette users use flavored products. Flavors in tobacco products entice youth, while the nicotine keeps them hooked for life. In 2020, 8-in-10 youth who currently used e-cigarettes reported using a flavored product, up from 7-in-10 in 2019.

Menthol is just as, if not more, harmful than any other flavor in tobacco. Notorious for its ability to mask the harshness of tobacco, menthol makes it easier to start and harder to quit. If our aim is to protect our keiki and reduce the burden of tobacco in our communities, we must prohibit the use of menthol in all tobacco products.

Ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products will reduce the appeal of these products, protecting our keiki from a lifetime of addiction, tobacco-related illness and early death.

I **strongly support HB756 HD2**, respectfully ask you to pass it out of committee.

Many thanks for your consideration,

Forrest Batz, PharmD
Keaau, HI

TESTIMONY HB 756 HD 2

To : Finance Committee

I am a long-time Kauai pediatrician, and I am writing in that role to strongly support HB 756 HD2 banning flavored tobacco products and mislabeling e-liquids as nicotine-free. We are in the midst of a vaping epidemic in Hawaii, with startling statistics – 13.2% of high school students and about 10.3% of middle school students are regular vapers. E-cigarettes and other flavored products are purposely made attractive to our keiki by their fruit, candy, and menthol flavors. They are, in effect, attractive starter drugs for nicotine inhalation. Nicotine is one of the most addictive substances, especially for children, and by exposing young people early, they are easily hooked for life. Vaping products contain much higher nicotine concentrations than individual cigarettes, which is a strategy put forth by tobacco manufacturers to hook vulnerable teens and preteens and maintain nicotine dependence. Menthol is particularly harmful in vaping liquids and cigarettes because of its ability to mask the harshness of tobacco, thereby making it more palatable. This is a recipe for ever increasing medical costs to treat the long-term consequences of nicotine addiction long into the future. The most practical and expeditious way to prevent introducing vaping liquids to children is to prevent the sale of flavored tobacco products in the first place.

There is a clear-cut way to greatly reduce flavored tobacco use by our most precious resource – our keiki. That is to eliminate access to all flavored vaping liquids by legislation. There is absolutely no reason to avoid this responsibility. We owe it to our children

Linda J Weiner, MD

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 1:53:30 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jay Ihara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Good afternoon, Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the House Finance Committee.

My name is Jay Ihara, and I'm in strong support of HB756 HD2

Banning the sale of flavored tobacco products will lessen their appeal and help protect our youth from the risk of lifelong addiction. By ending the sale of these flavored products, we can reduce their attractiveness and safeguard our youth from a future of dependence.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 2:19:12 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Valdez	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Committee on Finance,

I am submitting testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT of HB756.**

As a young adult who was a student in 2014, I watched as electronic smoking devices infiltrated our schools, exposing my generation to a dangerous and addictive habit. Today, many of us have entered adulthood, and some of us have become teachers and parents who now see the ongoing effects of nicotine addiction on our keiki. What’s more, those of us who experimented with electronic cigarettes in our youth are now facing the long-term health consequences of those decisions.

Your support for this bill means you prioritize keiki and health over profits. All Counties are standing in solidarity regarding this issue, and we are hopeful you can keep your vision clear to promote health equity and combat the targeting of our Native Hawaiian keiki.

Mahalo for introducing this bill and choosing keiki over profits.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 3:43:54 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Richard Collins	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass the much needed legislation to protect the health of my own children and of all children in the state. Mahalo for your consideration.

Rick

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 3:59:15 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Austin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this bill prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products: the vast majority of our youth start addicting nicotine use through flavored tobacco products!

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 4:00:15 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Kiefer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi,

I support HB 756 to end the sale of flavored tobacco products. I am a physician, epidemiologist, JABSOM faculty member, and mother of 2 teenage boys.

I am sure you folks have seen in friends, family, or constituents the end result of a lifetime of smoking. As a physician, the images are bleak in adults: the chronic hacking cough, shortness of breath, ever-nagging nicotine addiction, loss of mobility, wasting from cancer, endless puffs of inhalers and popping prednisone which do nothing to stem the tide of wheezing and feeling of breathing through a straw, supplemental oxygen, repeat hospitalizations, frequent infections, gasping for breath and the undignified end of terminal illness on a ventilator.

Teenagers have done irreversible damage to their lungs via vaping, requiring *lung transplants*, [1] and *double lung transplants* [2]. They were children when they started on flavored nicotine products.

Flavored tobacco products are a gateway to addiction, and smokers who start young are more likely to become severely addicted. It's not obvious to kids that flavored tobacco products are addictive and can have long-term effect.

The tobacco industry has a long history of targeting kids with flavored products, and the evidence is clear that flavors play a key role in youth initiation and continued use of tobacco products.

The tobacco industry has a kid's menu. Let's end this, it is the right thing to do.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth Kiefer, MD MPH

[1] <https://www.hiphi.org/facing-certain-death-teenager-with-vaping-injury-gets-double-lung-transplant/>

[2] <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2024/01/19/vaping-leads-double-lung-transplant-22-year-old/>

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 4:01:01 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strong support. Thank you.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 4:05:58 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
mary santa maria	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Legislators,

I strongly support HB 756, the state wide ban on sale of flavored tobacco products including menthol. Flavors entice youth because it hides the way the nicotine taste. Nicotine hooks people, especially the young, and they are addicted to the nicotine for the rest of their lives putting them at risk for myriad diseases. PLEASE vote yes on the Flavor Ban bill. PLEASE protect our Keiki.

mahalo

Mary Santa Maria

Makawao, Maui

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 4:10:18 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vivienne Hill	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Testimony in Strong Support of HB 756, HD2
House Committee on Finance (FIN) Friday, 02-21-25 2:00PM**

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Vivienne Hill, and I am submitting testimony in strong support of HB 756, HD2, which would prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Hawai‘i. As a high school student and youth advocate, have seen firsthand how this predatory industry targets young people with misleading marketing tactics - and the awful effect it has on our students.

Beyond the alarming youth usage rates, flavored tobacco products disproportionately harm marginalized communities, including Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander youth, who are already at higher risk for tobacco-related health disparities. This bill is not just about banning flavors, it’s about protecting public health, preventing addiction, and stopping an industry that profits from the exploitation of young people.

We cannot allow tobacco to continue preying on our youth while public health organizations and educators work tirelessly to reverse the damage. If we want a future where Hawai‘i’s youth can thrive, we must take action now.

This is an investment in Hawaii’s future - in protecting our young people.

I urge this committee to pass HB 756, HD2 without weakening amendments and stand strong in defense of our keiki.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Vivienne Hill

12th Grade, Prisma High School. 96822

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 4:12:26 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Chang	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

:(

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 4:42:23 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patricia Blair	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Ban flavored tobacco for health sake

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 4:59:57 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheryl Reeser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Honorable Legislators,

I am writing to strongly support HB756, HD2. We need to protect our keiki from becoming addicted to e-cigarettes and prohibiting flavored tobacco products is a good way to prevent them from becoming interested in the first place. There is no reason more important than protecting our keiki from a lifetime of addiction and resulting health issues.

Mahalo,

Cheryl Reeser
Makawao, Maui

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 5:45:54 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Desiree Constance De La Espriella	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

HB756 HD2 Hearing February 21, 2025

My name is Desiree De La Espriella, and I am a mother of three young children. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 756 HD2. As a parent, I am deeply concerned about the growing influence of flavored e-cigarettes on our youth, and this bill is an important step towards protecting the health and well-being of our children.

Flavored e-cigarettes, including those with sweet and fruity flavors, are specifically designed to attract young people. They are easily accessible, often marketed in a way that makes them seem fun and harmless, and they normalize smoking behaviors at an early age. I've witnessed firsthand how pervasive the availability of these products has become, and it worries me that my children, as they grow older, may be exposed to them and influenced to try them.

I want my children to grow up in an environment where they can make healthy choices and avoid the dangers of nicotine addiction. Flavored e-cigarettes pose a significant threat to their future, as studies show that young people who start using e-cigarettes are more likely to transition to smoking traditional cigarettes. As a mother, I cannot stand by and allow these harmful products to become more accessible to my kids and other children in our community.

HB756 HD2 is a critical measure that will help protect our children from the dangerous influence of flavored e-cigarettes and prevent the normalization of smoking in our society. I urge you to pass this bill and ensure that we are doing everything we can to protect the keiki of Hawaii.

Sincerely,

[Desiree De La Espriella](#)

Lahaina, Hawaii

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 6:06:33 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Clayton Silva	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This bill will cause many small business vape shops to go out of business.

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the House Committee on Finance, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT of HB756 HD2, Relating to Health.**

Most vapes contain nicotine, a highly addictive chemical that has numerous known adverse health effects. Not only does nicotine use put youth at increased risk of smoking cigarettes and future addiction to other drugs, it can also harm the parts of the developing brain that control attention, learning, mood, and impulse control. (CDC, 2024)

We have an epidemic in youth vaping/e-cigarette use in Hawaii and statistics show that 80% of youth who vape say that they started with a flavored product. The sweet flavors- some of them locally themed like Maui Mango and Hawaiian POG and coming in deceptive packaging that looks like candy- lure kids in, decrease perception of harm, and then they become addicted to nicotine. When it comes to adults, menthol is a concerning tobacco flavor that is very popular, especially among Native Hawaiians. (Hawai'i BRFSS, 2022).

As a Nurse Practitioner trained to provide Tobacco Cessation Treatment, I've seen first-hand how challenging it is for individuals to quit once addicted. As a Professor of Nursing who teaches in a local hospital, I see the suffering and expense that tobacco product use has inflicted on our community, especially in its contribution to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), heart disease, stroke, and cancer.

We have an opportunity to intervene in this unfolding public health crisis in our state by passing a bill banning flavored tobacco products to protect our youth and advance health equity. As a nurse I am confident it is the right thing to do; as the parent of a 16-year-old, I am passionate about urging you to act without delay.

Mahalo,

Kathleen Hagan, MS, APRN, ANP-BC

Paia, Maui, Hawaii

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 8:49:12 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kailana G Hagan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the Finance Committee:

I am a student at Seabury Hall, a school on Maui, and I am in **strong support of bill HB756 HD2**. As a high school student, there is a lot of vaping that I know of from other students. I can see why others are so enticed to begin vaping with all of the fruity flavors, which is what has caused most of them to start. The addictiveness has taken them away from other activities that they did, and the health risks that are associated with vaping are what scare me for the sake of my classmates and all students across the state. Please support this bill for the health of students so they have fewer distractions by flavored vapes and more time for school and sports.

Mahalo,

Kailana Hagan

Maui, HI

February 19 2025

To: The Honorable Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
The Honorable Representative Jenna Takenouchi, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Finance

Re: Strong Support of HB 756 HD2 to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products

Hrg: Friday, February 21, 2025 at 2:00pm, Conference Room 308

Position: Support

My name is Katie Folio and I am the mother of two girls, ages seven and ten. I am a former teenage smoker and, as a result, a strong advocate for anti-tobacco legislation, especially that which will protect youth, so I strongly support HB 756 HD2.

While I didn't realize it at the time, there were two primary contributing factors to my picking up smoking as a teenager - media and flavors, particularly menthol. No one in my family smoked. I was not influenced by my family to smoke in any way, if anything, I was educated on the harms of smoking and I knew it was not good for my health. However, I was raised in the era of Joe Camel, and smoking was in movies, television, and smoking ads were posted at eye level in grocery stores and gas stations. Eventually, and without my really being aware of it, the advertising worked.

The first cigarettes I ever tried were flavored and menthol. Unflavored cigarettes were not very appealing to me as a teenager and were very harsh to smoke when I did eventually try them, but flavored cigarettes, including strawberry and vanilla, were very appealing to us as teenage girls. Thankfully flavored cigarettes other than menthol were eventually banned, but I blame menthol for my nicotine addiction, which took ten years to beat. Sadly menthol is still addicting youth, and it breaks my heart that Maui has the highest rate of teen cigarette smokers who smoke menthol cigarettes (18.5%), surpassing the Hawai'i State average (15.8%).

I became an advocate for tobacco control as an adult because of my experience as a teenager. I don't want to see other kids end up in the same situation, or worse, because of nicotine addiction. I don't want to see my girls end up where I did, or die from cancer too early. I was one of the lucky ones - I was able to eventually quit. Not everyone can, and that is what big tobacco and the vaping industry rely on. It's how they are so powerful, how they make such ridiculous amounts of money by literally killing people, simply by addicting them as early as possible. It's unacceptable, and it needs to stop.

We know that tobacco control legislation works. Our youth smoking rates dropped significantly from the '90s once we started passing comprehensive legislation. But our progress is being undone by the popularity of vaping with youth. We can't allow flavored tobacco products to

continue to be on the market, in any form. Vaping products are tobacco products and most often contain extremely high levels of nicotine. One cigarette contains 10 mg of nicotine in a freebase form that makes it harsh to inhale (which menthol helps to mask). Disposable vaping products popular with youth often contain up to 50 mg of nicotine in a salt formula that makes it smoother (i.e. easier) to inhale. They are designed to make it easier to get addicted to nicotine, creating lifetime users.

This bill is part of an upstream solution to help protect our youth from the harms of nicotine and tobacco products. The industry's strategy is to try to place the responsibility of youth use of their deadly products back on the youth, their parents, and our educators, rather than taking responsibility themselves. These are the wrong people to hold responsible. These are the people reeling from the consequences of youth nicotine addiction and the industry's successful targeting strategies. The goal is to create a safe and healthy environment where youth are not drawn to these highly addictive products to begin with; where the healthy choice is the easy choice for them to make. HB 756 HD2 is an important step in this direction.

We thank you for listening to our health experts and organizations, and to our youth who have been asking for these protections for years.

Mahalo nui loa,
Katie Folio
Kula, Maui, Hawai'i

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 9:32:30 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shaleigh Reed	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am testifying against flavored vape flavors that are targeting our youth. In these times where our keiki are already living in a "peer pressured" world through social media, we are adding to their problems with flavored vaping. They might think it's helping them with their anxiety and worries but don't realize it's actually killing them slowly but surely. So many people don't know about the harmful effects of vaping and most don't care to find out until they are taking their child to the emergency room with popcorn lungs from vaping. I have 3 boys and my oldest is 7, I know as a parent that is knowledgeable about the harmful effects of vaping so I will do my all to protect my kids from it. I am testifying on behalf of all the keiki that have parents that don't know about flavor vaping and all the keiki who don't have a voice to save them from flavor vaping. Mahalo.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 9:59:10 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jill Yoshicedo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill to combat tobacco companies targeting our youth.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 10:18:13 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kali Karalius	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of HB756 HD2, which aims to end the sale of flavored tobacco products, including menthol. This bill is a critical step in protecting the health of our youth and advancing health equity in our communities.

Flavored tobacco products are specifically designed to appeal to young people, and the data speaks for itself. In 2020, 8 in 10 youth who currently use e-cigarettes reported using flavored products. This is a concerning trend, as nicotine in these products has the potential to create lifelong addiction. The sweet and appealing flavors mask the harshness of tobacco, making it easier for our keiki to start using these products and harder for them to quit.

Menthol, often overlooked, is just as dangerous as any other flavor. It has the unique ability to make tobacco use more palatable for young users, creating a gateway to addiction. It is well-documented that menthol cigarettes are more difficult to quit and can entrench lifelong nicotine dependence. By including menthol in the ban, we are taking an important step toward addressing these harmful effects.

The impact of flavored tobacco products is not felt equally across all communities. The tobacco industry has a long history of targeting vulnerable populations, particularly youth and communities of color. In Hawai‘i, we see a disproportionate impact on Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations. A staggering 63.7% of adult smokers in Hawai‘i use menthol cigarettes, and the rate is even higher for Native Hawaiians—80.7%. Additionally, Native Hawaiian youth have the highest rates of e-cigarette use in high school (33.3%), followed closely by other Pacific Islanders (27.9%). This alarming trend highlights the urgent need for policy change.

By ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol, HB756 HD2 will reduce the appeal of these products to our youth, decrease nicotine addiction, and work toward health equity by addressing the disproportionate burden on our communities of color.

I strongly urge you to pass this important legislation to protect our keiki, our communities, and the future health of Hawai‘i. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kali Karalius

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 10:57:52 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marilyn Itomura	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a parent and dentist in Hawai'i, I strongly support and stand behind HB 756. I am concerned as I see vaping as a serious health problem in Hawai'i. Younger children are especially vulnerable and when they smell the sweet scent of the vapors, it entices them to want to do it as well. I've heard my niece comment that many of her summer fun leaders would be vaping in the break room (which was entirely filled with vapor) and she'll be just outside the room to smell the scents. Teachers have also mentioned to me how they've caught students as young as elementary in the bathroom vaping. Vaping is addicting and can also contribute to serious consequences for dental health such as inflammation of the gums, tongue, and mouth. Vaping may also cause dry mouth increasing the risk for tooth decay and gum disease which may lead to loss of teeth. These types of effects can end up costing hundreds if not thousands of dollars to repair. Vaping ingredients also have known carcinogens (lead, mercury, formaldehyde) that can increase the chance of oral and respiratory cancers.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/19/2025 11:51:27 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In our state, 13.2% of high school students and 10.3% of middle school students still report “current use” of e-cigarettes. With 8 in 10 kids starting with a flavored tobacco product, we need to prohibit the sale of flavors that are addicting our keiki. Please pass this bill to keep our children safe from the harms of the tobacco industry.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 7:35:21 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meetu Kelen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 756, HD2, which seeks to prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Hawai‘i. This bill is a necessary step to protect our keiki from the dangers of nicotine addiction and the harmful health effects of tobacco use.

Hawai‘i continues to face a youth vaping epidemic, with 13.2% of high school students and 10.3% of middle school students reporting current e-cigarette use. Studies have shown that 8 in 10 youth who use tobacco products started with a flavored product. These flavors, such as candy, fruit, and menthol, are deliberately designed to attract young people, making it easier for them to become addicted to nicotine at an early age.

By eliminating flavored tobacco products from the market, we can significantly reduce youth initiation and prevent the long-term health consequences associated with nicotine addiction. This bill will not only help protect our children but also reduce the financial burden of tobacco-related diseases on our healthcare system.

The tobacco industry has long targeted young people with enticing flavors and deceptive marketing tactics. It is time for Hawai‘i to take a stand against these predatory practices and put the health and well-being of our keiki first. We cannot allow another generation to fall victim to nicotine addiction.

I urge you to pass HB 756, HD2 without any weakening amendments to ensure that all flavored tobacco products, including menthol, are removed from our communities. Let’s take a bold step in safeguarding the health of Hawai‘i’s youth and ensuring a tobacco-free future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Meetu Kelen

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 9:01:45 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bryan Mih	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

As a parent, pediatrician, and medical director of the Kapi’olani Smokefree Families Program, I strongly support this bill, which prohibits the sale or distribution of flavored tobacco products, including flavored e-liquids and menthol cigarettes.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has strongly supported elimination of flavored tobacco products, including menthol. These products have been shown to be disproportionately used by young people, especially teenagers, as the menthol and other flavors make it easier to start using tobacco and nicotine.

These products are targeted towards our keiki with flavors such as mango, bubblegum, gummy bear, and pineapple. The tobacco corporations have intentionally included menthol, which provides a soothing, cooling effect similar to that in cough drops. Menthol reduces the harsh irritation to the lining of the nose, mouth, and airways, which allows smokers and vapers to inhale more easily. This makes it much easier for young people to initiate tobacco use. The tobacco industry has a long history of marketing menthol cigarettes to youth and vulnerable groups. In Hawaii, 81% of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander smokers use menthol cigarettes.

Hawaii has one of the highest rates of middle schoolers (16%) and high schoolers (26%) currently using e-cigarettes—it is twice the national average. Nicotine is a highly addictive drug that impacts the adolescent brain, reducing impulse control and affecting mood. Those who use e-cigarettes are four times more likely to smoke regular cigarettes later on. The e-cigarette industry claims these are cessation devices, but a recent study has shown that even if one adult can quit with these devices, the trade-off is 81 young people who will start the habit in their place. This is completely unacceptable.

Once young people are addicted to nicotine, it is extremely difficult to quit. By eliminating these products from Hawaii, we have the chance to improve the health of many, especially of our keiki.

On behalf of the keiki and young people of Hawaii, I urge you to support this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration and support of this important measure.

Sincerely,

Bryan Mih, MD, MPH, FAAP

Pediatrician

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 9:43:38 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leslie Lexier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- Menthol is just as, if not more, harmful than any other flavor in tobacco. Notorious for its ability to mask the harshness of tobacco, menthol makes it easier to start and harder to quit. If our aim is to protect our keiki and reduce the burden of tobacco in our communities, we must include menthol.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 10:02:54 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shelly Ogata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and members of the Committee on Finance:

I am in strong support of HB756 HD2. Ending the sale of all flavored tobacco will advance health equity as disparities in tobacco use are directly attributed to the industry's history of marketing menthol products to youth and people of color. Thus, our Native Hawaiian youth have the highest rates of e-cigarette use (33.3%), followed by other Pacific islanders (27.9%).

Flavors entice youth and nicotine keeps them hooked for life. Please do your part to end the sale of flavored tobacco products and protect our keiki from a lifetime of addiction.

Mahalo for your time and support of HB756 HD2. This is your legacy to our precious keiki and the health of our communities.

Shelly Ogata, RN, MPH

Re: HB756 HD2

Relating to Health

Keiki Caucus; Prohibition; Sale; Labeling; Flavored Nicotine Products; Nicotine Product Flavor Enhancers; E-Liquids; Penalties; Appropriation

Thank you for the opportunity to be able to provide support of HB756 HD2. As a mother, I am in strong support of this measure to prohibit the sale of flavored tobacco products and mislabeling of e-liquids as nicotine free . Throughout the years, the increase of sales and children using flavored nicotine products has significantly increased. Essentially, this has been a gateway and introduction to smoking, given the multitude of flavors and appeal with advertisement. Tobacco and vaping use has obvious detrimental effects to communities, and especially children.

Additionally, many companies do not screen appropriately with tobacco sales to minors, resulting in easy access to a product that is detrimental to their health. Vaping rates in Hawaii are amongst the highest in the nation, with almost 1 out of 3 students regularly vaping.

The health of our keiki should be a priority. By supporting this measure and ban, this will aid in preventing the access and usage of the aforementioned products and improving our keiki's health.

Sincerely,

Bev Barcai

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 10:21:29 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victoria Hill	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We should absolutely prohibit the sale of flavored nicotine products and nicotine product flavor enhancers and the mislabeling of e-liquids as nicotine free. This directly targets children, teens, and young adults and creates long term negative health consequences.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 10:44:31 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Valerie Smalley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Finance Committee ,

As a Tobacco Treatment Specialist in the State of Hawaii for over 20 years, I am in strong support of HB 756 HD2. While removing flavors would prevent youth from starting and removing menthol would encourage adults in quitting, it would save the state approximately \$41.22 million in long term health care cost savings from adult and youth declines in smoking and vaping. I strongly encourage you to vote in favor of this bill. Lets follow other states as Massachusetts and California who have seen success with the removal of flavors.

Ending the sale of all flavored tobacco will advance health equity – disparities in tobacco use are due to the tobacco industry’s history of marketing menthol cigarettes to youth and people of color. In Hawai‘i, 63.7% of Hawai‘i adult smokers use menthol cigarettes and 80.7% of Native Hawaiians who smoke use menthol cigarettes. (Hawai‘i BRFSS, 2022).

Thank you

Valerie Smalley

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 10:50:18 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Danny Hwang	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Danny Hwang, and I am a local business owner operating three stores in Hawai'i for over 20 years. I strongly oppose HB 756 due to its severe unintended consequences on small businesses like mine. The proposed ban on menthol and flavored vapor products would eliminate nearly 70% of my sales, making it extremely difficult to sustain operations, support my employees, and contribute to the local economy. As a long-time business owner, I have seen firsthand the challenges of running a business in Hawai'i, and this bill would only make it harder for responsible, law-abiding retailers to survive.

Beyond the economic harm, HB 756 also undermines public health efforts by removing access to FDA-authorized vapor products that serve as a viable harm-reduction tool for adult smokers. These products have undergone rigorous scientific review by the FDA to ensure they meet public health standards and can assist in smoking cessation. By banning these regulated alternatives, the bill may unintentionally push former smokers back to combustible cigarettes, reversing years of progress in reducing tobacco-related harm. Public health policy should be based on science and harm reduction, not prohibition that drives consumers toward more dangerous options.

Additionally, history has shown that bans like this do not eliminate demand but instead create unregulated black markets, making it easier for youth to access illicit and potentially unsafe products. Rather than punishing responsible business owners, we should focus on enforcing existing laws that prevent underage sales and ensuring that only FDA-authorized products remain available to adult consumers. I urge you to consider the economic and public health consequences of HB 756 and vote against this harmful legislation. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Danny Hwang

Bevmart

Ewa Pantry

Kakaako Smokes

February 21, 2025

Aloha Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi and members of the House Committee on Finance. I appreciate this opportunity to offer written testimony in **strong support of HB 756, HD2 Relating to Health.**”

Tobacco use among kids is driven by youth-friendly e-cigarette flavors like mint, fruit, and candy. From 2017 to 2019, e-cigarette use more than doubled among high school students (from 11.7% to 27.5%) and tripled among middle school students (from 3.3% to 10.5%), according to the CDC’s 2019 National Youth Tobacco Survey. While those numbers decreased during the COVID pandemic and societal restrictions that limited youths opportunities to gather publicly, the numbers began to climb again when COVID restrictions were removed and youths again had easier access to tobacco/nicotine products. Numbers among Hawaii youths are even higher, especially on neighbor islands.

E-cigarettes are available in thousands of youth-appealing flavors, including fruit, candy, mint and menthol. The overwhelming majority of youth e-cigarette users report using flavored products. Tobacco companies target youth and adolescents with million-dollar marketing campaigns and thousands of appealing flavors that are specifically designed to attract and hook kids.

Mint and menthol flavored tobacco products are heavily marketed to kids, especially those from communities of color and the LGBTQ community with products specifically designed to entice them. A 2019 Stanford study found that JUUL’s initial advertising campaigns were “patently youth oriented.” Nearly two-thirds of high school students who use e-cigarettes use mint or menthol flavors. Menthol products, with their cooling and soothing effects, entice kids to use tobacco products. More than half of all youth and young adult smokers smoke menthol cigarettes.

Though e-cigarettes are the most commonly used tobacco product among middle and high school students, they are also using other flavored tobacco products such as cigars, cigarettes, hookahs, chewing tobacco, and most recently, as mentioned in this bill’s preamble, the newest product being promoted by the tobacco industry--oral nicotine pouches that come in different flavors and strengths, many with levels of nicotine several times higher than a full pack of traditional cigarettes.

And even though e-cigarettes are often marketed as a less harmful alternative to traditional cigarettes, there’s no evidence on the long-term health impact of their use. What is known is that nicotine can have adverse health effects on kids, such as causing addiction to dangerous tobacco products, harming their brain development, and increasing the risk of heart disease. Recent studies have found that e-cigarettes decrease blood flow in the heart even more than traditional cigarettes and can worsen heart disease risk factors such as high cholesterol. Tobacco industry (and its front groups) claims that alternative nicotine products are “safer” than traditional cigarettes are like comparing the relative safety of jumping off a 20-story

building vs. jumping off a 50-story building. All tobacco and nicotine products offer varying levels of health risks, all which impact on our state's healthcare costs and the lives of our people and their families.

According to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, annual health care costs to Hawaii directly caused by smoking totals \$611 million. Annual Medicaid costs to Hawaii caused by smoking amounts to \$152.3 million. Hawaii residents' state & federal tax burden from smoking-caused government expenditures totals \$955 annually. And smoking-caused productivity losses in Hawaii are \$1.1 billion. These amounts do not include health costs caused by exposure to secondhand smoke, smoking-caused fires, or use of non-cigarette tobacco products. Productivity losses are from smoking-caused premature death and illness that prevent people from working. Tobacco use also imposes costs such as damage to property. Clearly, the cost of tobacco use to Hawaii and its taxpayers pales compared to the tobacco taxes it generates. According to the Hawaii Department of Taxation, cigarette and tobacco tax collections for calendar year ending on December 31, 2024 were \$81,708,340 (includes tax revenue from sales of cigarettes, all other tobacco products, e-liquids, cigars, and little cigars). If we were to look at this strictly as an economic issue, the state must determine whether tax revenue generated by tobacco sales is more important than the healthcare costs to the state resulting from tobacco use in Hawaii. Clearly, emphasizing protection of tobacco tax revenues is a losing economic argument.

Current FDA tobacco flavor policy falls short of what is necessary to address youth tobacco use, state and local governments need to move forward to address loopholes. Under the FDA's guidance, thousands of e-cigarette flavors will remain on the market since the policy exempts menthol e-cigarettes and allows fruit, candy, and mint flavored liquid nicotine used in refillable open tank systems or in disposable e-cigarettes (like the popular brand Puff Bar), to stay on the market. In addition, other flavored tobacco products such as menthol cigarettes and . smokeless tobacco and cigars are still allowed to be sold.

I respectfully urge you to support HB 756, HD2 to begin to curb our extremely high youth use rates of nicotine products and help end the generational cycle of disability and early deaths caused by nicotine products.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify,

Respectfully submitted,

Don Weisman
Kailua, HI

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 1:49:56 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leslie Garo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee on Finance,

My name is Leslie Garo and I am a parent of 2 that resides on the island of Maui. I am in strong support of HB756 HD2! My daughter has shared that students as young as 2nd grade are getting a hold of electronic smoking devices. Many youth don't realize that the harmful chemicals and nicotine in these devices impact their future. Our youth, especially on Maui, have endured many life changing events. It is important to protect them and their future at all costs. The flavors in tobacco products entice youth, while the nicotine keeps them hooked for life. In 2020, 8 in 10 youth who currently use e-cigarettes reported using a flavored product, up from 7 in 10 in 2019 (National Youth Tobacco Survey). Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products will reduce the appeal of these products and protect our keiki from a lifetime of addiction. The harmful effects from flavors include menthol. This also entices the youth and keeps them addicted by masking the harshness of tobacco.

By ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products, we will be able to save so many lives. We will be able to uplift the future of the youth, their potential, their strengths and capabilities of being our future leaders of Hawai'i. Big Tobacco does not discriminate and will continue to target the youth, Native Hawaiians, Filipinos and more members of our community. Please pass this bill.

February 20, 2025

Re: Testimony of Strong Support for HB756 HD2

Dear Chair Yamashita and members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Carly Noelani Kajiwara and I was born and raised in Moanalua, Hawai‘i and have been the Director of Educational Trainings and Education Coordinator at Stanford University’s REACH Lab for the past 2.5 years. I have a background in psychology from the University of California, Berkeley and have additional training in Legal and Forensic Psychology from the University of California, Irvine. Since doing this work with the REACH Lab, I have gained comprehensive experience of the harms of flavored nicotine products on youth nation-wide. I have also observed these harms directly on Hawai‘i’s youth through close collaboration with community partners such as the Hawai‘i Community Foundation, Coalition for a Drug-Free Hawaii, and many other local organizations.

In this testimony, I wish to express my strong support for House Bill 756 HD2 to prohibit the sale of flavored tobacco products, for all flavors and all products, and flavor enhancers. This bill will help to protect Hawai‘i’s youth from the harms of flavored tobacco products.

Flavors play a significant role in teen use. Flavor or “taste” is one of the most common persuasive marketing techniques used to promote food (mostly candy and snacks) to children on TV. Exposure to ads for flavored products is positively associated with youth consumption, and most money spent by youth is on food or beverages, particularly sweets. Research on e-cigarettes is consistent with these findings, concluding: flavors play an important role for online e-cigarette marketing and boosts user interaction and positive emotion; flavored (vs. unflavored) e-cigarette ads elicit greater appeal and interest in buying and trying e-cigarettes; and the appeal of ads marketing flavors is linked to rapid and persistent adoption of e-cigarettes among youth.

The vast majority of youth in the U.S. who try tobacco initiate with flavored tobacco products, including 81% of e-cigarette ever users, 65% of cigar ever users, and 50% of cigarette ever smokers. More recent data show that nearly 85% of past 30-day e-cigarette users used flavored e-cigarettes, with fruit flavors being the most popular, followed by candy, desserts, and other sweet flavors. Adolescents are more likely to report interest in trying an e-cigarette from a friend if it is menthol-, candy-, or fruit-flavored than if unflavored.

Most adolescent current tobacco users cite flavors as a reason for use (including 81% for past 30-day e-cigarette users; 74% for past 30-day cigar users). Three quarters of adolescent and young adult flavored tobacco product users reported they would quit if flavors were unavailable.

Flavor ads attract youth. In order to attract young and new users, the tobacco industry adds characterizing flavors like mint, menthol, fruit, and candy to tobacco. These flavors appeal to new users by masking the harsh taste of tobacco. This is also true for locally inspired flavors such as li hing mui, passion-orange-guava, and liliko'i. For e-cigarettes, flavors result in a more pleasant smell than that found with tobacco alone. Using flavors in e-cigarettes is a key marketing strategy to reach and recruit youth.

Policies prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products work. In 2019, the REACH lab conducted a study of over 3,000 California adolescents and young adults. We found that those who used flavored e-cigarettes and lived in areas with flavor bans reported finding it more difficult to purchase their flavored e-cigarette or e-liquid. Another study using data from the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) in Oakland showed that their convenience store flavored tobacco sales restriction was associated with a reduction in youth e-cigarette use. Further, restricting flavored e-cigarette use did NOT result in a rise in combustible cigarette smoking.

Another study showed even local policies restricting the sale of flavored tobacco products have had effects, such as was observed in Massachusetts where local-level flavor bans were associated with reduced likelihood of past 30-day e-cigarette use and reduced frequency of use.

Flavored tobacco products are harmful to our community. Prohibiting all flavored tobacco products will help prevent tobacco use, especially among youth.

Please pass this critical bill to protect our keiki.

Mahalo nui,



Carly Noelani Kajiwaru, MLFP (pronouns: [she/her](#))
Director of Educational Trainings and Education Coordinator, Stanford REACH Lab
[Tobacco Prevention Toolkit](#), [Cannabis Awareness and Prevention Toolkit](#), and [Vaping Information, Solutions, and Interventions Toolkit](#).

Stanford REACH Lab

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HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 2:44:23 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Chris Wells	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this Nanny State bill. The freedoms of voters that use these products must come first. There is no doubt that this bill will also cost jobs as retail shops get shut down. Taxes on sales will go away in favor of the black market and on top of that new taxes will have to be taken to fund enforcement of this mess of a bill.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 4:30:28 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Karen L Worthington	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I write in strong support of HB 756 HD2. As the mother of a high school student, I regularly hear about the extent of vaping and e-cigarette use among teenagers in Hawaii. Many youth are attracted to the "fun" flavors of tobacco products and then become addicted to the products. Please pass HB 756 HD2 to reduce the appeal of these dangerous products.

Sincerely,

Karen Worthington, Maui

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 4:42:24 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sean Higa	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

These vaping products are a safe way limit cigarette consumption for people. Don't ruin it by making it less enjoyable. Mahalo.

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 5:15:13 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Ball	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Yamashita, Vice Chair Takenouchi, and members of the committee,

For too long, flavored vapes have been marketed to children, resulting in alarming addiction statistics that imperil Hawaii's future. Please vote for common sense measures to prohibit the selling of these products and their marketing to our youth. As an educator and a parent, I urge you to value the health and well-being of Hawaii's keiki above the sway of powerful tobacco lobbyists. Thank you for your time and consideration.

With aloha,

Dave Ball, Waiialae-Kahala

HB-756-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/20/2025 5:34:51 PM

Testimony for FIN on 2/21/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael S. Nakasone	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this junk. Vapers have rights too!