

Submitter: Maya von Geldern
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB702

Dear Chair Reynolds and members of the committee,

My name is Maya Pueo von Geldern. I'm a mom of elementary and middle school kids, a substitute in our school district, a PTA leader and community advocate. I spend every day advocating for kids. I'm here in support of SB 702.

We are and come from generations who were lied to, who were tricked into smoking cigarettes because it made people look sophisticated, or cowboy-rugged. We all knew the Marlboro man who crossed desert canyons and mini-mart windows with a cigarette in hand.

In some of my favorite childhood movies, like Stand By Me and Grease, the cool kids were smokers, and cigarettes were a HINT to the end of adolescence. But then there was the movie "Thank You for Smoking", which should have been the exposé that put an end to the tobacco tricks, and yet after all this - we haven't learned our lesson yet.

Spin-tactics focussed in on our kids. These flavors that should describe Slushies rather than tobacco, are being used by an industry that sees the writing on the wall - future generations are not picking up smoking as they did once before.

"So how do we trick the next generation into becoming future customers?", they ask. This is how they do it... The other day I was at the corner store near our school and I was SHOCKED by the display, front and center, in the faces of kids who stood in line to pay for their afterschool snacks. Row after row of small, bright colored boxes that look more like gum than tobacco, stared back at the kids who stood and pointed out the ones that sounded best to them. I looked at this crowd of kids and all I could think was "you're too young to navigate all of this."

We've heard the many ways that nicotine effects the brain. The effects that stand out to me, as an education advocate, are those those that affect children's moods, their impulse control and attention span. My brain flashes to headlines that emphasize the learning gaps our kids are facing in our state, and yet here we are tempting children with something we KNOW will make things even worse. I mean, we're seeing this use seep into elementary schools? Aren't we supposed to be doing everything we can to set children up to succeed? Shouldn't we be addressing issues holistically, so that our kids do have a chance at success in all areas of life?

If you've ever lost a loved one to lung cancer, as our family did almost 2 years ago, or have even only watching a loved one battle tobacco addiction their entire life, you should want to do everything you could to prevent others from the same suffering.

How much of our resources go into education around tobacco products, and counseling, let alone medical treatment? Spend more money on warning people that tobacco kills? How about just making it hard for tobacco to actually kill? Let's preemptively address nicotine addiction so that we're not raising the next generation of people needing to learn how to quit.

Please consider this next generation - vote to put a stop to this all, and vote yes on SB 702.

Thank you for your time.