



TO: Assembly Committee on Substance Abuse & Prevention
FROM: Christina Diaz, MD, Anesthesiology Physician, Children's Wisconsin
DATE: Thursday, September 30, 2021
RE: Comments regarding AB 348 – Raising the legal age for sale, purchase and possession of nicotine, tobacco and vapor products

Chairman James and members of the committee, thank you for considering my testimony today. My name is Dr. Christina Diaz and I am a Pediatric Anesthesiologist at Children's Wisconsin and Professor of Anesthesiology with the Medical College of Wisconsin.

I have been a pediatric anesthesiologist for 13 years and I have seen first-hand the negative impacts nicotine, tobacco, and vapor products have on our teens. The tobacco products being offered to our youth are rapidly changing and evolving. That is why we need your help and support on Assembly Amendment 1. We want to ensure that this legislation is comprehensive in covering all products and is enforceable. Our literature shows that 90% of adult smokers picked up this negative habit when they were adolescents. We need to stop the next generation from picking up a habit that will affect their health the rest of their lives. We are aware that e-cigarettes/vaping products can be at least as addictive, if not more, than the traditional cigarette.

I know that by moving this legislation forward with this amendment we will be taking a crucial step forward in addressing this public health crisis. It is our job to do our part to take care of Wisconsin kids and this legislation will help keep kids safe and healthy and protect them from these harmful products.

As many of you may recall, Children's Wisconsin had a collection of previously healthy patients that arrived in significant respiratory distress and were later diagnosed with EVALI (E Cigarette or Vaping product use Associate Lung Injury). Because the workup for this disease frequently includes diagnostic flexible bronchoscopy and bronchoalveolar lavage (fluid sample from the lungs for testing) which require general anesthesia, I took care of these patients in the operating room as part of their diagnosis. I can attest how detrimental vaping was to these children's lung function and how anesthesia was destabilizing to their condition. Normally, these diagnostic procedures are well-tolerated by patients, however for patients with EVALI, their airways were very reactive and resulted in coughing, wheezing needing additional support. We struggled with maintaining appropriate oxygen levels and these children acted like the most severe asthma attacks. They did not respond easily to our treatment and required us "pulling out all the stops". My colleagues and I had to work very hard to keep these children safe and help them recover. I feel that this collection of patients is the "canary in the coalmine" warning of the future dangers if we don't act now.

Tobacco 21 is an important component of addressing this public health crisis among our youth. **I again ask for your support of this legislation with Assembly Amendment 1.** Please contact me with any questions you may have.

Dr. Christina Diaz MD FASA FAAP
Professor of Anesthesiology

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Children's complies with Federal civil rights laws. We do not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. Si no habla inglés, se programarán servicios de idiomas en forma gratuita. Llame al (414) 266-7848 (TTY: 414-266-2465). Yog hais tias koj tsis txawj hais lus Askiv, peb yuav teem sij hawm muab kev pab txhais lus pub dawb rau koj. Hu rau (414) 266-7848 (TTY: 414-266-2465).

Kids deserve the **best.**