

To: Chairman Barker and Members of the Fed and State Committee

From: Rep. Cindy Holscher

RE: HB 2563, relating to increasing the minimum age to purchase or possess cigarettes and tobacco products from 18-21

Date: Feb. 13, 2020

Good morning, I'm Rep. Cindy Holscher. As many of you are likely aware, I have three children ages 16, 14, and 12. Because of their ages, conversations regarding vaping are quite frequent in our household. Like many areas across the nation, we are facing a crisis with this situation in Johnson County. I applaud our local school districts which have taken action to educate parents and students about the concerns with vaping, but, it is quite clear we are playing a game of catch-up.

There are several issues that seem to have prompted the increase in usage including:

- no visible smoke like traditional cigarettes
- enticing flavors
- sleek design which is easy to hide/camouflage
- usage of paid media influencers (these are people who are paid to post info/pictures on social media displaying vaping in a positive light)
- ability to purchase products in close proximity to schools at places like convenience stores
- ability to purchase online
- usage of rebates online which reduces the cost of vaping products
- parents who purchase the products for their kids and are unaware of the danger
- variety of products including reusable and disposable
- the high levels of nicotine

With the recent passage of Tobacco 21 on the federal level, the market is once again morphing. This Legislation places restrictions on tobacco products, including vaping. However, it does not address disposable vaping products. While they are a bit more expensive, keep in mind, many kids are addicted so they are paying the extra cost.

An additional issue to consider is the fact that while some cessation products are available over the counter, they are not available for purchase if under 18. There are instances where teens have taken up the product unbeknownst to their parents, then decided they'd like to try to quit, but can't purchase the OTC products. While lowering the age to access cessation products may not be the answer, we need to find solutions for teens to break away from this addiction in an accessible, cost efficient manner.

Of course, the best solution is prevent kids from starting this habit. Again, we are already working from behind as this has taken off to epidemic levels. Our goal with legislation has to be more than addressing what has already happened, rather, we must look to where the market is going. I am in support of this bill and welcome additional aggressive measures to curb usage among teens.