

Teens Against Vaping, Inc.

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To the Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy (Committee on Oversight and Reform),

Teens Against Vaping has a single goal: to end teenage vaping. We believe that JUUL is largely responsible for the youth nicotine epidemic that has been developing. This letter is with the intent to describe our experiences with JUUL, how JUUL has risen to popularity, patterns of usage, and its severe effects on our community and friends.

There is a multitude of reasons why JUUL appeals to teens. For starters, its perception as a sleek, buttonless Silicon Valley tech device is extremely attractive. JUUL has become the newest gadget, a piece of technology that everybody wants their hands on because of this aesthetic. JUUL's original marketing techniques made the product appeal in the same way as getting a new smartphone. And although JUUL itself has taken down their own social media pages and shifted away from their lifestyle marketing techniques, the effects of their previous actions are still felt today, as thousands of new posts regarding vaping continue to pop up on social media. Because of this emerging clout, JUUL has now become one of the most popular fads. But unlike traditional fads, JUUL has not faded away, because the nicotine keeps reeling its users back in.

Furthermore, JUUL is extremely easy to hide, which allows teens to vape secretly. Its sleek and compact form-factor along with the quickly disappearing clouds it produces make JUUL usage discrete. At our high school, we have seen multiple instances in which classmates have used their JUUL in the middle of class without the teacher even realizing. It is also extremely difficult for parents to discover JUULs, as hiding one can be as simple as sticking it into your pocket or sock drawer. Even if they are found, they can be easily confused for something else, such as a USB.

Last, and what we believe is the most appealing factor to teens, are the flavors. Flavors such as mango, cucumber, and crème are extremely inciting to youth and are the key reason for experimenting with vaping. If the goal of JUUL was truly to get smokers to quit, then it would make sense for them to produce only their menthol or tobacco flavored pods. Selling their extravagant flavors makes us suspect that they intend to expand the target audience beyond smokers, specifically to youth. JUUL's flavors have also sparked the issue of vaping as an appetite-suppressant. In an era where teens are body conscious and try to consume as few calories as possible, JUUL has become a substitute for eating dessert or even entire meals. We have had recounts of students use JUUL with mango pods instead of eating lunch at school, because the flavor satisfies their cravings, and the nicotine limits their hunger. In addition to the health risks of extended malnutrition, even when teens return to proper eating habits, their unintended nicotine addiction will persist.

JUUL has had significant effects on the lives of our community and friends, and its prevalence in our high school was the inspiration to form our organization. For example, every time I went to the restroom

between my second and fourth-period classes, there was a crowd of kids vaping in the stalls. Their makeshift JUUL schedules became more important than their school schedule, as groups of students would coordinate when they would meet in the bathroom during class time to vape. JUUL is holistically a detriment to students' education, as many JUUL users have told us that they cannot go through a full 90-minute class period without having to use their JUUL to get their nicotine. The issues have gotten as serious as preventing teens from going to college, as we have received recounts of students failing AP exams and the SAT because they could not concentrate without nicotine and were unable to access their JUUL during the testing period.

JUUL users have developed ways to consistently supply themselves with JUUL pods and sneak them into their schools. The most common way for teens to obtain JUUL was through older friends, such as high school seniors in states where they could buy tobacco products at age 18. The older suppliers set up "networks" in which they resell JUUL products to classmates or underclassmen at a marked-up price. Furthermore, the products would eventually reach the middle school level through the same chain of selling to younger students. Also, per our questionnaires, we were told by students at our high school as well as in other states that they would hide JUUL in their sock or even their underwear as a means to sneak the device into their school. Once at school, they would often share the same JUUL with their friends. This means that it has become increasingly easy for the spread of outside diseases through the use of a JUUL, because nobody can know who or what it has touched.

After taking all the circumstances into account, we believe that the best legislative option would be a "Flavor Ban." This would ban the sale of all flavored vape juices and tobacco products. Since the flavors are the most appealing aspect of vaping to teens, banning flavors would eliminate the source of the problem. Also, raising the age to buy tobacco to 21 from 18 would be effective, as it would greatly reduce the number of vape products that get distributed to high schoolers through older students or siblings.

We appreciate the chance to share our experiences and hope that the youth nicotine epidemic is soon wiped out.

Sincerely,

Kamal Mazhar

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President of Teens Against Vaping

(On behalf of William Wieder, Ryan Vandervate, and Mahat Palle)