

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: The Huge Vape Charade

Today, every parent, educator and decision maker are being warned that vaping has become a youth epidemic with 22.5% of NYS teens vaping currently. Vaping first emerged on the mainstream around 13 years ago and was mistakenly thought to be an approved smoking cessation tool to aid millions of tobacco users to kick the cigarette habit. There was also a time when people could vape indoors, even on hospital grounds. The acceptance of vaping by many as a safer smoking alternative obscured real health harm caused by the devices that would only become known years later.

Early research studies conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) that warned of vaping's harmful effects were dismissed by the tobacco industry as these findings threatened the arrival of smokeless nicotine products. But scientific evidence pointing to their negative effects continues to mount and demonstrates that vaping causes nearly as much damage as traditional cigarettes. Federal data suggests that about 14% (over 2.5 million) of American youth from 6th through 12th grades vape, while another study reported 1 in 20 American adults vape. That compares to just 1 in 10 tobacco smokers.

While vape companies insist their products are meant to help smokers quit, health experts and advocates don't agree or support that assertion. Erika Sward, Assistant Vice President of National Advocacy for the American Lung Association was quoted as stating, "E-cigarettes are meant to sustain addiction in people who might otherwise quit or get help, they need to quit altogether. It is a product that continues to attract and sustain people as opposed to helping them end their addiction. What remains to be determined is the long-term health consequences to youth – including addiction – caused by these products. Unfortunately, that information will only be learned in the years to come."

The earliest versions of e-cigarettes emerged around 2007 with the first ones made mostly in China. In 2015, the launch of the Juul devices, made to look like an innocuous USB drive, took over social media. Advertising on social media featuring attractive stars and high-profile endorsements thrust e-cigarettes into the limelight with the promise of satisfying nicotine cravings while supposedly holding back the thousands of carcinogens and volatile chemicals found in traditional cigarette smoke.

Vaping products come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Some early models were made to resemble traditional cigarettes, while others were large, metallic, and bulky, with refillable tanks of e-liquid in various flavors and strengths. Vapes are now easy to find in compact and disposable forms as well, and easily hidden by youth.

E-cigarettes and nicotine vape have since become a multi-billion-dollar industry. E-liquids in flavors like fruit medley and peach mango watermelon were more reminiscent of wine coolers and alcoholic spritzers than traditional tobacco. This helped attract a new class of nicotine users that had never used traditional cigarettes. Though vapes have been touted as an option for cigarette smokers, a 2018 analysis in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* estimates 1.9 million American adults who vape have never smoked tobacco cigarettes. A recent survey from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed that more than 2.5 million American youth are hooked on nicotine in e-cigarette devices. Recent NIDA data has linked long term use of vapes and e-cigarettes to a multitude of heart conditions whereby using vapes increased the risk of developing heart disease at about the same rate as smoking cigarettes did.

E-cigarette products have been allowed to remain on the market for years. But in 2020, the FDA requested that manufacturers submit applications to keep their products on the market. In March 2022, the FDA said that it had reviewed 99% of the nearly 6.7 million e-cigarette products that have been submitted for premarket authorization. It had issued about a million market denials. Many of the approved companies were small players in the market. There are still several outstanding decisions concerning companies that maintain a larger share of the market.

With the troubling rise in youth use the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), were banned flavored cartridges by February 2020. Pre-2020 Juul pods came in flavors ranging from mint and cucumber to creme brulee. However, that limited ban on flavored cartridges had virtually no impact on youth vaping because it left on the market many alternative technologies such as disposable devices and refillable pods.

When the FDA cut off access to kids' favorite flavored cartridges, many of them just shifted to menthol. The harsh fact is more than 55% of youth ages 12-17 who smoke use menthol. Menthols are easier to start and harder to quit. The municipal crackdown on vapes began years before, in 2016. After years of debate over the health risks and perceived rewards of using vapes, the FDA issued sweeping new regulations that classified e-cigarettes as tobacco products, making them subject to the same scrutiny as traditional cigarettes. For the first time, e-cigarette makers would have to register with the FDA and disclose to regulators detailed lists of ingredients used in their products and the processes used to manufacture them. The rule change also mandated that no one under 18 could purchase e-cigarettes. That has since been raised to 21.

The move was applauded by health experts and anti-tobacco activists, but it infuriated industry representatives. Contrary to what the industry is saying about the lack of harms, use of E-cigarettes and traditional combustible cigarettes on their own can cause a battery of inflammatory and heart problems, however when used simultaneously, the health effects could be even worse. Long-term use of either caused damage to blood vessels, though each appeared to cause some adverse effects that the other does not, suggesting that dual use of the products compounds the damage. Blood from the e-cig users caused more permeability in the blood vessel cells than the blood from both tobacco smokers and nonusers, raising the risk of cell damage and heart disease. Blood from tobacco smokers had higher levels of certain circulating biomarkers of

cardiovascular risks. Researchers claim, using both products together could increase their health risks compared to using them individually.

NYS banned the sale of flavored e-cigarettes in 2020, however the initiative left an array of products still available on the market. This year Governor Hochul proposed in her Executive Budget raising the cigarette tax by one dollar a pack from \$4.35 to \$5.35 to make access harder for youth, and shoring up the troubling loopholes left in the 2020 ban to expand to all tobacco products including menthol, cigars and cigarillos and smokeless tobacco products. This is a step in the right direction to address the youth epidemic.

For help Quitting smoking or vaping or to help a loved one beat a Nicotine Addiction please visit the American Lung Association on their Website at: www.americanlung.org. “The American Lung Association says the only thing that should go into your lungs is clean air, so if you’re inhaling anything, it could potentially be toxic to your lungs! The New York State Smokers’ Quitline assists thousands of New Yorkers every year in their attempts to break free from smoking and other tobacco and the service is free and confidential. Call 1-866-NYQUITS (1-866-697-8487) or visit them at: <https://www.nysmokefree.com/>.for Quit Help.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention, and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. The Coalition is concerned about all combustible and electronic products with marijuana and tobacco. The Agency is employing environmental strategies to educate and update the community regarding the negative consequences in collaboration with Carol Meschkow, Manager- Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or to learn more about electronic products visit the Vaping Facts and Myths Page of SAFE’s website to learn more about how vaping is detrimental to your health www.safeglencove.org.