



May 22, 2025

Chair Meek, Vice-Chair McLane, Senator Patterson, Senator Starr and Senator Taylor,

My name is Carrie Nyssen, and I serve as the Senior Director of Advocacy for the American Lung Association, and we stand in full support of Senate Bill 702A.

Flavored tobacco products are not benign. These are not simply products of preference — they are intentionally designed to facilitate addiction, especially among youth and vulnerable populations.

Let me share a personal story. My father had his first cigarette while serving in the Army. He told me he thought it was disgusting — it tasted awful and made him cough. But when a friend later offered him a menthol cigarette, he tried again. This time, he said it tasted better, smoother. The cooling sensation and numbing effect of menthol masked the harshness of the smoke. That cigarette went down easier — and it started decades of addiction.

My father eventually developed chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD. In his later years, he struggled to breathe — a devastating consequence of his addiction.

Flavors are especially appealing to youth. For a young woman named Petrea, the flavor was banana — her favorite. She shares her story on our website. She began vaping to cope with anxiety and depression. It was easy to access flavored vapes at gas stations, and the fruit flavors made nicotine seem harmless.

As she said, *"When you're vaping, you don't think about nicotine because the flavoring masks it — that's what got me."*

Her use quickly escalated. Her vape device registered thousands of puffs a day. Eventually, her lungs collapsed, and she was placed in a coma for ten days. Petrea survived, but she now lives with permanent lung damage.

Flavored tobacco products — whether menthol cigarettes, flavored cigars, or fruit-flavored e-cigarettes — are often the entry point for youth. In fact, the vast majority of youth who use tobacco products begin with a flavored product.

Senate Bill 702A represents a critical, life-saving step. By restricting the sale of flavored tobacco products, we have the opportunity to prevent addiction before it starts and protect the health of future generations.

We urge you to stand up for health and equity by supporting this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carrie Nyssen".

Carrie Nyssen