

## Lisa Cataldi

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**From:** Natalie Cotta <nataliebcotta@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 28, 2021 12:48 PM  
**To:** House Health and Human Services Committee  
**Subject:** HB 6396 Against

Natalie Cotta, Bill number HB 6396 against.

Dear Governor,

My name is Natalie Cotta, I am a Rhode Island resident and I used to smoke a pack and a half of cigarettes every day for 5 years. When I heard about nicotine vape products, I tried it out and was able to completely quit smoking cigarettes. I had tried many times beforehand to quit - whether it was cold-turkey, with patches, gum, or lozenges - and nothing worked. With the help of vape products, I have been able to stay tobacco free for 6 years now, and my health has dramatically recovered. I am no longer out of breath, I can exercise now, and I no longer have a smoker's cough. My dad was also able to quit a 30+ year cigarette habit after I introduced him to vaping. When the bill was passed to ban vape products and flavored vape juice, I had to seek elsewhere to find vapor products. This has been increasingly hard as other states have started banning flavored vape juice and vape products, along with the federal vape ban. I do not want to go back to smoking cigarettes, but I feel as though that will happen if I am no longer able to purchase vape products. My dad is also at risk of resorting to smoking again, as he has also tried everything he could to quit smoking prior to vaping. His health is not the best, and I fear that him resorting back to cigarettes could make things worse for him.

I also wanted to point out a few hypocrisies. Cigarettes cause more than 480,000 (CDC) deaths per year. Vaping related injuries have been a fraction of that, and my opinion is that those are due to unregulated vapor products that are bought off the street and contain vitamin E, which is not found in regulated vapor products. I believe that it was because of the ban that consumers sought out products on the street which led to illness. I also believe that these products that were bought on the street were marijuana vapor products, not nicotine vapor products. Because of these statistics, why is it that cigarettes are not outlawed, but vapor products are? I also wanted to bring up the fact that flavored alcohol is not outlawed, but flavored vape juice is. If the purpose of this ban is to prevent children from potentially getting their hands on flavored vape juice because it is "enticing" to them, why is it that flavored alcohol isn't banned? Children are also getting their hands on alcohol as well as cigarettes, so why is it that only vape products are being outlawed? According to the CDC, there are 261 alcohol related deaths per day, for a total of 95,000+ per year. Why are vape products, with an alarmingly decreased rate of deaths and illnesses, are banned, but not other products such as alcohol and tobacco?

If the purpose of the ban is to prevent minors from attaining "harmful" vapor products, why not fix the problem of them actually attaining them instead of just banning them altogether, which leads to those same minors seeking products on the street, which I believe is the cause of the reported illnesses. I truly believe that if the sale of vapor products was better regulated, especially at corner stores and gas stations, the issue of minors obtaining vapor products would be solved, and the vapor products that legal consumers are purchasing which are actually helping would still be available.

I also wanted to address how harmful this bill was to the livelihood of the many Rhode Island residents who started small businesses by opening up vape shops. As someone who supposedly supports small businesses, you should be aware that this bill has negatively impacted so many

residents who legally opened vape shops. These small business owners regulated the sale of vapor products, which included checking ID's in order to purchase products from their stores, as well as buying products only from established nicotine vape suppliers.

Please consider how many people have been and would be negatively affected by this bill. 1 in 20 Americans vape. In my own case, this has helped me quit smoking cigarettes and has dramatically changed my health for the better. There are other ways to prevent minors from obtaining vapor products, while still benefitting those who legally use them. It is also important to note that the ban will lead to more minors seeking products illegally on the street, which will not solve the problem and actually make it worse.

Sincerely,  
Natalie Cotta