

# Rhode Island Chapter

INCORPORATED IN RHODE ISLAND

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



## **Officers**

### **President**

Peter Pogacar, MD, FAAP  
Phone: 401/884-8900  
[prpogacar@gmail.com](mailto:prpogacar@gmail.com)

### **Vice President**

Scott Rivkees, MD, FAAP  
Phone: 203/641-2545  
[scott\\_rivkees@brown.edu](mailto:scott_rivkees@brown.edu)

### **Secretary**

Shuba Kamath, MD, FAAP  
Phone: 401/444-8531  
[shuba\\_kamath@brown.edu](mailto:shuba_kamath@brown.edu)

### **Treasurer**

Sara Ford, MD, FAAP  
Phone: 401/444-4612  
[SFord@lifespan.org](mailto:SFord@lifespan.org)

### **Immediate Past President**

Allison Brindle, MD, FAAP  
Phone: 401/444-8531  
[allisonbrindle@gmail.com](mailto:allisonbrindle@gmail.com)

### **Chapter Executive Director**

Jennifer L. Mann, MPH  
Phone: 401/743-1507  
[jmann.aapri@gmail.com](mailto:jmann.aapri@gmail.com)

## **Board of Directors**

Emily Allen, MD, FAAP  
Ailis Clyne, MD, FAAP  
Diane DerMarderosian, MD, FAAP  
Susan Duffy, MD, FAAP  
Patricia J. Flanagan, MD, FAAP  
Gregory Fox, MD, FAAP  
Natalie Golova, MD, FAAP  
Allison, Heinly, MD, FAAP  
Pamela High, MD, FAAP  
William H. Hollinshead, MD, FAAP  
Chandan Lakhiani, MD, FAAP  
Elizabeth Lange, MD, FAAP  
Kristin Lombardi, MD, FAAP  
Karen Maule, MD, FAAP  
Beth Toolan, MD, FAAP

### **Mailing Address:**

American Academy of Pediatrics  
Rhode Island Chapter  
PO Box 20365  
Cranston, RI 02920

Testimony in support of House Bill 7225  
House Finance

March 5, 2024

Dear Chairperson Abney and Members of the Committee,

The Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics **strongly supports H7225**, Article 6 regarding Tobacco and Electronic Nicotine Delivery System (ENDS) products.

Tobacco use continues to be an enormous problem, with over 46 million adults currently using a tobacco product in the US.<sup>1</sup> In Rhode Island, about 1,800 deaths each year are attributed to smoking and other tobacco use.<sup>2</sup> This burden also weighs heavily on youth, as 17.8% of Rhode Island high school students and 5.6% of middle school students reported e-cigarette use in 2021.<sup>3</sup>

In our practices, we hear from our patients every day about their struggles with e-cigarettes and other tobacco products. An 11-year-old who was vaping with friends, said it was because he “had a sweet tooth”. One 16-year-old explained that he felt like his vaping had “gotten out of control”, he was hooked and was pleading for help to quit. A 23-year-old who had started using e-cigarettes as a teen was now struggling to cut back on his pack-a-day use of regular cigarettes.

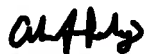
The RIAAP supports **Anti-Smoking and Vaping Initiatives for Youth**, including the implementation of school-based vaping intervention programs to encourage students to quit using tobacco products, support for programs to reduce teenage vaping in Rhode Island, as well as codifying ENDS flavor restrictions, including menthol. Most youth who use tobacco products, including ENDS say they use “because they come in flavors I like”.<sup>4</sup> Flavored tobacco products are designed to appeal to kids. Kid-friendly flavors like cotton candy, strawberry, mint and menthol mask the taste of tobacco, making it easier for young people to start use. In fact, most youth initiate tobacco use with a flavored product.<sup>5</sup>

The RIAAP supports **Enhancing the Regulation and Taxation of Tobacco** by increasing the state’s cigarette tax from \$4.25 to \$4.50 a pack, taxing ENDS products at 80% of their wholesale value, and moving the regulatory and licensing authority over ENDS products from the Department of Health to the Division of Taxation, as is currently the case for all tobacco products

other than e-cigarettes. Increasing the state's cigarette tax may result in more adults quitting, fewer teens starting to smoke, and more substantial revenue to fund tobacco prevention programs. In fact, every 10% increase in the price of cigarettes can reduce use by 4% for adults and 7% for youth.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the taxing of ENDS products would align Rhode Island with 32 other states nationwide, including other New England states.<sup>7</sup>

Preventing and treating tobacco and e-cigarette use in youth and adults in Rhode Island is critical to ending the tobacco epidemic and the downstream impacts on our state's health. **We urge you to pass H7225.**

Sincerely,



Allison Heinly, MD, FAAP  
Board of Directors  
Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

1 Cornelius, M. E., Loretan, C. G., Jamal, A., Lynn, B. C. D., Mayer, M., Alcantara, I. C., & Neff, L. (2023). Tobacco Product Use Among Adults—United States, 2021. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 72(18), 475.

2. Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. [https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/rhode\\_island](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/rhode_island)

3 Rhode Island Department of Health. Center for Health Data Analysis. 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

4. Ambrose, B. K., Day, H. R., Rostron, B., Conway, K. P., Borek, N., Hyland, A., & Villanti, A. C. (2015). Flavored tobacco product use among US youth aged 12-17 years, 2013-2014. *Jama*, 314(17), 1871-1873

5. Cullen, K. A., Gentzke, A. S., Sawdey, M. D., Chang, J. T., Anic, G. M., Wang, T. W., ... & King, B. A. (2019). E-cigarette use among youth in the United States, 2019. *Jama*, 322(21), 2095-2103.

6. Tauras JA, O'Malley PM, Johnston LD, "Effects of Price and Access Laws on Teenage Smoking Initiation: A National Longitudinal Analysis," Bridging the Gap Research, ImpacTeen, April 2001

7. CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/statesystem/factsheets/ecigarette/ECigarette.html>