

March 23, 2026

Senate Committee on Finance  
Rhode Island General Assembly  
82 Smith Street  
Providence, RI 02903

Chair DiPalma, Vice Chair Ciccone, Vice Chair Felag and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the millions of taxpayers and consumers we represent, the Taxpayers Protection Alliance (TPA) urges you to support Senate Bill (SB) 2844, which proposes to change current flavored e-cigarette restrictions by allowing flavored vapor products to be sold exclusively in licensed, adult-only vape shops. The bill creates a new legal definition for these specialized stores, which can sell vapor products only to customers aged 21 and older, with proof of age required prior to sale.

Today, more than 30 million American adults smoke cigarettes, causing more than 480,000 deaths annually in the U.S., including 40,000 from secondhand smoke. This accounts for about one in five deaths, or 1,300 daily.<sup>1</sup> A cigarette contains more than 6,000 ingredients that release 7,000+ chemicals when burned.<sup>2</sup> Smoking leads to numerous diseases and strains the healthcare system, costing taxpayers billions of dollars each year. Nicotine, unlike traditional cigarettes, does not carry the same adverse effects. Tobacco harm reduction (THR) products offer a less harmful alternative for Americans trying to quit smoking, providing options that deliver nicotine without the harmful chemicals in traditional cigarettes.

Flavored THR products have been successful in reducing smoking rates nationwide. According to the National Institutes of Health, data suggests that flavored THR products are more effective in helping adults transition away from combustible cigarettes than those using unflavored products. Former-smoking vapers report that switching between flavors within the same day is common and that regular use of multiple e-liquid flavors was associated with significantly higher odds of having quit smoking, with fruit and sweet flavors being the most popular choices among established long-term vapers.<sup>3</sup>

One of the main criticisms to justify banning flavored THR products is that flavors attract youth use, even with age-based laws. Flavored THR products are essential for helping adult smokers transition away from combustible cigarettes. Nationwide youth vaping data shows a significant decline in youth vaping, dropping to 5.1 percent in 2025, which represents a 74.5 percent decrease from 2019. In Rhode Island, among students who had ever used e-cigarettes, curiosity was the main reason for trying them, at 32.9 percent. Interestingly, only 4 percent of these students cited flavors as their reason for use.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Cigarette Smoking," September 17, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/about/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> American Lung Association, "Tobacco Facts," <https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/smoking-facts>.

<sup>3</sup> National Institute of Health, "How Does the Use of Flavored Nicotine Vaping Products Relate to Progression Toward Quitting Smoking? Findings From the 2016 and 2018 ITC 4CV Surveys," <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10576309/>

<sup>4</sup> Tobacco Harm Reduction 101, "A New Path for Harm Reduction: Rhode Island Considers Vape Shop Model," <https://www.thr101.org/post/a-new-path-for-harm-reduction-rhode-island-considers-vape-shop-model>

By restricting flavored product sales to these specialized stores, SB 2844 effectively limits youth access while still allowing adults to use their preferred THR products in a regulated environment. This balanced approach safeguards youth without infringing on adult vapers' rights, promoting public health and responsible retail practices. As observed, flavor bans lead to dangerous and unintended consequences like increased black market sales, and although many states have implemented flavor bans, an unintended outcome in states like California and Massachusetts is a decrease in vaping, while cigarette smoking rates among young adults have actually increased in some areas.<sup>5</sup>

SB 2844 aims to modify existing flavored e-cigarette restrictions by permitting the sale of flavored vapor products exclusively in licensed, adult-only vape shops requiring proof of age. The bill seeks to balance youth protection with adult smokers' harm reduction options. For the above reasons, we support SB 2844, which proposes to change current flavored e-cigarette restrictions by allowing flavored vapor products to be sold exclusively in licensed, adult-only vape shops.

Thank you for the opportunity to engage on such an important issue. Feel free to reach out if you or your offices have any questions.

Sincerely,



David Williams  
President

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<sup>5</sup> Yale School of Medicine, "Unanticipated effects of e-cigarette flavor restrictions may offset potential benefits," <https://medicine.yale.edu/news-article/unanticipated-effects-of-e-cigarette-flavor-restrictions-may-offset-potential-benefits/>