



# Durbin issues response to a bipartisan bill addressing sharp increase in number of kids using e-cigarettes

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CHICAGO – As the use of e-cigarettes among youth continues to rise dramatically, U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today unveiled bipartisan legislation to crack down on kid-friendly flavorings in highly-addictive e-cigarettes and cigars. Durbin’s *Stopping Appealing Flavors in E-Cigarettes for Kids (SAFE Kids) Act* will place strong restrictions on e-cigarette flavorings and ban cigar flavorings altogether.

**“We have made great progress in convincing kids not to start smoking cigarettes. They know that cigarettes kill and that, nowadays, it’s hard to find someplace where smoking cigarettes is even allowed,”** Durbin said. **“But, I am convinced that e-cigarettes represent the ‘re-invention of smoking,’ cooked up by Big Tobacco to hook a new generation. Unfortunately, kids don’t understand that e-cigarettes are highly addictive, harmful to their developing brains, and can lead to a lifetime of tobacco addiction. These products, especially flavors that shamelessly appeal to kids, are doing more harm than good.”**

Specifically, Durbin’s *SAFE Kids Act* would:

- **Place Strong Restrictions on E-Cigarette Flavorings:** The bill would generally restrict flavored e-cigarette products, but allow manufacturers one year to prove to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that their e-cigarette flavorings meet three criteria. If companies can prove that their e-cigarette flavors meet these three criteria, they can remain on the market:

(1) Help adults quit smoking cigarettes;

(2) Do not increase youth initiation of nicotine or tobacco products; and

(3) Do not increase the risk of harm to the person using the flavor.

- **Ban Cigar Flavorings Altogether:** Given that there is no public health benefit to smoking cigars, the bill would ban the use of all flavors in cigars within one year (the 2009 Tobacco Control Act banned the use of flavors in cigarettes, except for menthol).

While e-cigarette companies claim their products are solely made to help adults quit traditional cigarettes, only 3 percent of adults are using e-cigarettes whereas 12 percent of kids are using them. In fact, a recent study out of Dartmouth found that e-cigarette use leads to 81 times more new smokers than quitters.

E-cigarettes are now the most commonly used tobacco product among youth—more than 2 million teenagers used them last year, which is a 653 percent increase from just five years ago. While smoking rates for traditional cigarettes are decreasing—from 28 percent in 2000 to 8 percent in 2017—the nation is seeing significant increases in youth use of cigars and e-cigarettes. From 2011 to 2015, the percentage of e-cigarette use among high school kids increased ten-fold from 1.5 percent to 16 percent. Among kids, 81 percent of e-cigarette users said their first tobacco product had flavoring.

In Illinois, 27 percent of all high school students used e-cigarettes in 2016, while less than 10 percent of high school students smoke cigarettes. Additionally, high school students smoke cigars at higher rates than cigarettes. This popularity is being driven in part by kid-friendly e-cigarette and cigar flavors such as cake batter, whipped cream, and gummy bear. Yet, while there are flavor restrictions for cigarettes, thousands of kid-friendly flavors of e-cigarettes and cigars proliferate on the market.

Durbin will introduce the *SAFE Kids Act* with U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) this week in Washington.