

Testimony of Breathe DC Inc.
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Committee on Health and Human Services Public Hearing
Bill 21-780: The Electronic Cigarette Parity Amendment Act of 2016
July 13, 2016

Good afternoon Chairperson Alexander and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Dr. Charles M. Sutton and I am representing Breathe DC and am here to testify in support of **Bill 21-780**. I will speak on the implications of passing **Bill 21-780** from the perspective of our Smoke-Free Places, Home Healthy Home Project.

With funding from the D.C. Department of Health, Breathe DC has created the Smoke-Free Places, Home Healthy Home project to help stimulate a smoke-free housing initiative within the District. Our smoke free housing project is designed to work with property owners and managers in the District to adopt and implement a voluntary smoke-free housing policy within their multi-unit properties.

Often, in my work across the city, property owners and managers have questions about other alternative forms of tobacco or smoking that may be included in their smoke-free housing policy. At Breathe DC, we encourage property owners and managers to include Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems or ENDS in their respective smoke-free housing policies. Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) is an umbrella term for products such as electronic cigarettes, personal vaporizers, vape pens, e-cigars, e-hookah, or vaping devices.

Although there are several reasons that we encourage property owners and managers to include Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems in their smoke-free housing policies, I will address only two: fires and explosions as well as potential health risks to other tenants.

With respect to fires and explosions, according to a March, 2016 tobacco control research paper entitled *Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems: overheating, fires, and explosions* by BMJ Respiratory Research of the 92 OH/F/EXP events that have occurred in the USA since 2009, 45 (49%) injured 47 people, and 67 (73%) involved property damage beyond the product. The study concludes: "The scope, causes and trajectory of ENDS OH/F/EXP events remain incompletely defined. Some events have resulted in life-threatening injury, permanent

disfigurement or disability, and major property damage". However, in the October 2014 FEMA research paper, *Electronic Cigarettes Fires and Explosions*, FEMA stated that 80% of e-cigarette explosions happen during charging while approximately 12% occur while the device is in storage or in use by an individual (hand, mouth, or pocket). Of the several reasons that we give to encourage property owners and managers to include e-cigarettes and other types of ENDS in their smoke-free housing policy - the potential risk of fire and explosions would be primary, however minimal.

The second concern that I address with property owners and managers around the District is that of the potential health risk that may result from the secondhand vapor emitted by e-cigarettes and other types of ENDS. Currently, there is insufficient evidence that using e-cigarettes and other types of ENDS or inhaling the secondhand vapor they produce is safe.

To date, no long-term studies have been conducted on e-cigarettes and other types of ENDS, so the long term effects on the health of those that use these devices and those exposed to secondhand vapor is unknown. What we do know is that according to The Society for Research on Nicotine & Tobacco and The Society for the Study of Addiction is that "e-cigarette vapor exposes people sharing a room with an e-cigarette user to contaminants, including nicotine, particulates and hydrocarbons". Once inhaled, these particles can affect the heart and lungs and cause serious health effects.

So, in addition to the potential fire hazard involving ENDS, we work with property managers and owners around the District to also consider the potential health risk of these products - despite the lack of research - it is better to error on the side of caution. Particularly when we consider that in many of these homes in the District, you have children with Asthma.

In conclusion, although much research still must be done on the potential harmful effects of e-cigarettes and other types of ENDS, we at Breathe DC would encourage this Committee, if it has not already done so, to consider incorporating not only e-cigarettes into Bill 21-780, but also other types of ENDS as well. We at Breathe DC urge you to pass this very important Bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.