



**Testimony Presented to the Philadelphia City Council
By Kaanan Raja, Children First Health Policy Associate
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My name is Kaanan Raja and I am here on behalf of Children First. I want to thank Councilmember Ahmad and this body for taking action on the youth vaping crisis. At Children First, our health team works to make policies that ensure all kids grow up healthy, whether that's because they have access to health care, mental health support, or safe homes. We support this law because this bill protects kids from the harms of vaping.

The data is clear and troubling: according to the [Philadelphia Department of Public Health](#), in 2024, 38% of Philadelphian youth reported trying e-cigarettes and 19% currently use them. Rates are highest among Black and Latino youth in underserved neighborhoods, deepening existing health disparities.

This crisis is not abstract for me, it is personal. While working in public high schools as a public health intern, I facilitated health education sessions. Nearly every student in my class admitted they had tried vaping. Many believed e-cigarettes were “safer” or “less addictive” than cigarettes, and most were completely unaware that vapes contain even higher levels of nicotine than cigarettes. These kids weren't reckless — they were misinformed and unprotected.

[Scientific research](#) confirms what I've learned firsthand: nicotine exposure during adolescence causes irreversible harm to brain development, impairs cognitive functions like attention and memory, and dramatically increases the risk of lifelong addiction. Thankfully, we know what works. Public health strategies like graphic warning labels and targeted education have helped drive an 86% decrease in youth tobacco use from 1997 to 2021, thanks in large part to clear public health warnings.

This bill's warning sign requirement builds on this evidence-based intervention. Moreover, it channels 50% of fines back into youth vaping prevention and education programs. Councilmembers, the Vape-Free Futures Act protects our children from the harmful effects of nicotine addiction and sends a clear message: Philadelphia is committed to a vape-free future and to protecting its youth from the harms of nicotine addiction.

Thank you for considering this critical legislation. We urge you to vote yes.