

ARKANSAS STUDENT ADVOCACY PRESENTATION

Arkansas Senate Committee on Public Health

Breathe Free Arkansas

Breathe Free Arkansas is an initiative supported by the Arkansas Department of Health, dedicated to promoting healthy, smoke-free, and vape-free environments. The organization operates through both adult and youth coalitions, working collaboratively to raise awareness about the dangers of tobacco use and vaping.

To date, Breathe Free Arkansas has delivered nearly 100 educational presentations throughout Pulaski County, reaching schools, neighborhood associations, community organizations, and public events. In addition, the initiative actively partners with health clinics, prenatal and dental offices to share vital resources that support individuals in quitting vaping and tobacco use.

Through education, outreach, and community engagement, Breathe Free Arkansas continues to highlight the health risks associated with vaping and smoking while empowering individuals to make healthier choices.

Protecting Public Health: Prohibiting Vaping in Public Places

Presented by:

Student Advocates for Healthy Communities
Breathe Free Arkansas Project Prevent Coalition

Date: Wednesday, April 1, 2026 National Take Down Tobacco Day

Location: Room A, Big Mac Building

Honorable Members of the Senate Committee

Sen. Missy Irvin, Chair

Rep. Jeff Wardlaw, Chair Rep. Cameron Cooper Sen. Dave Wallace, Vice-Chair Rep. Jeremy Wooldridge, Vice-Chair Rep. Jay Richardson Sen. Scott Flippo Rep. Stephen Magie Rep. Denise Jones Ennett Sen. Ricky Hill Rep. Jack Ladyman Rep. Wayne Long Sen. Greg Leding Rep. Mary Bentley Rep. Bart Schulz Sen. Clint Penzo Rep. Kenneth B. Ferguson Rep. Kendra Moore Sen. John Payton Rep. Fred Allen Rep. Ryan A. Rose Sen. Fredrick J. Love

Rep. Aaron Pilkington Rep. Zack Gramlich Rep. Mark Perry Rep. Glenn Barnes Rep. Lee Johnson Rep. Dolly Henley

Program Agenda

Welcome & Opening Remarks

Terrilyn Jones, Program Coordinator, Breathe Free Arkansas

- Greeting to Committee Chair and Members
 - Introduction of student delegation
 - Statement of purpose:
-

Health Risks of Vaping

Presentation by Nadya Martinez, 8th Grade

- Nicotine harms adolescent brain development (memory, attention, learning)
 - Vaping exposes users to harmful chemicals and lung injury risks
 - Arkansas context:
 - Nearly **1 in 5 Arkansas high school students (19.6%) currently use e-cigarettes**
 - Emphasis: Youth exposure today leads to long-term health consequences
-

Youth Vaping Trends & Industry Influence

Mariah Gilmore, Sixth Grade Student

- Flavored products and marketing continue to attract youth
 - Arkansas data highlights:
 - **44% of Arkansas high school seniors have tried vaping**
 - Vaping among Arkansas students is **more than double traditional cigarette use**
 - Emphasis: Youth are being disproportionately impacted
-

Secondhand Exposure in Public Spaces

Myles Gilmore, Grade 5

- Vape aerosol contains nicotine, heavy metals, and harmful chemicals
 - Risks to children, pregnant women, and non-users
 - Public exposure concern:
 - **10.4% of Arkansas adults vape**, increasing secondhand exposure risks
 - Emphasis: Clean air should be protected in all public spaces
-

Impact on Schools & Communities

Malonyia Martinez, Grade 6

- Vaping disrupts learning environments and student behavior
 - Arkansas school data shows early exposure:
 - **7% of 6th graders and 22% of 8th graders have tried vaping**
 - Increased costs for schools (monitoring, prevention programs)
 - Emphasis: This is both a public health and education issue
-

Student Testimony

- Personal story or peer experience
 - Reflection on peer pressure and accessibility
 - Statement on how vaping affects youth daily life
-

Policy Recommendations

Malonyia Martinez, Grade 6

- Prohibit vaping in all public indoor spaces
 - Align vaping restrictions with existing smoke-free laws
 - Strengthen youth prevention and education efforts
-

Closing Statement

Malonyia Martinez, Grade 6

- Summary of key points
 - Reinforce urgency using Arkansas data
 - Call to action:
"We respectfully urge you to support legislation that protects all Arkansans from secondhand exposure to vaping."
-

Purpose of Presentation

This student-led initiative highlights the urgent need to address vaping as a growing public health concern in Arkansas. With youth usage rates remaining high and exposure increasing in public spaces, legislative action is critical to safeguard community health.

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere appreciation to the members of the Arkansas Senate Committee on Public Health for your leadership and commitment to protecting the health of Arkansas families and future generations.

Breathe Free Arkansas' programming and youth coalitions are sponsored by the Arkansas Department of Health

Contact Information

Breathe Free Arkansas
(501) 247-5529

(501) 291-2823

terilyn0127@outlook.com

"The health of Arkansas begins with the protection of its youth."