

# Protect Teens from Nitrous Oxide Injury - SUPPORT SB 936

## BACKGROUND:

- Nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), often called “laughing gas” or “whippets,” is a colorless gas with legitimate medical (anesthesia) and culinary uses (whipped-cream propellant). Most teens do not understand that serious risks may be associated with direct inhalation.
- The high begins quickly and fades fast, encouraging repeated inhalations, thereby increasing the harms
- Among teens and young adults, misuse has increased markedly over the past decade, with rising emergency department visits, poison center calls, and deaths. It is legal, relatively inexpensive and readily available.
  - 5-fold increase in Michigan from 2019 to 2023 (CDC MMWR)
- Immediate side effects of inhaling 100% nitrous oxide include oxygen deprivation, frostbite injuries to lips/airways from rapid gas expansion, lung damage (pneumothorax) from high-pressure canisters
- Chronic use may lead to functional vitamin B12 deficiency causing
  - Nerve damage, including the spinal cord
  - Psychiatric side effects such as anxiety, depression, psychosis

## [SB 936 \(Blakespear and Umberg\) Nitrous Oxide: Sales](#)

- Bans the sale/distribution of N<sub>2</sub>O containers holding more than 8 grams
- Bans the sale/distribution of containers designed for direct inhalation
- Bans the sale/distribution of flavored N<sub>2</sub>O (fruit, candy, dessert, alcoholic beverage, herb, or spice flavors)
- Bans knowingly selling devices that enable inhalation from N<sub>2</sub>O containers
- Applies to in-person sales, internet sales, and all electronic/digital transactions
- Exemptions for industrial/manufacturing use, licensed medical/veterinary/dental practitioners, food-grade N<sub>2</sub>O <9 gm in restaurant/food service

## KEY POINTS:

- Pediatricians see firsthand the severe neurologic injuries caused by nitrous oxide misuse
- Nitrous oxide is easy to access at smoke/vape shops, convenience stores, gas stations, and online retailers, and misuse is increasing among teens
- Large, flavored cylinders are targeting recreational use, not legitimate culinary use
- Banning the sale of flavored N<sub>2</sub>O and large canisters is a key step in reducing nitrous oxide harms in teens

## FAQ:

- AAP-CA is also supporting
  - *SB 758 (Umberg)* - would prohibit licensed tobacco retailers from selling nitrous oxide
  - *SB 1314 (Menjivar)* - would prohibit smoke shops from selling nitrous oxide
- In the medical setting, nitrous oxide is delivered with oxygen, and carefully dosed

Reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/74/wr/mm7412a3.htm>