

HB 5982

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WHIPPET WIPEOUT CAMPAIGN

Testimony - Adaora Ezike
Detroit Health Dept.

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Whippet WipeOut Campaign Coalition Talking Points

March 10, 2022, State of Michigan Legislative Hearing
March 21 through March 27, 2022 -National Inhalant Week Activities

Good Afternoon,

My name is Adaora Ezike, I serve as the Behavioral Health Manager at the City of Detroit Health Dept and as the Chair of the Education Work Group on the Whippet Wipeout Campaign Coalition.

In August of 2020 a group of volunteers led by Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision, collected over 25k nitrous oxide cartridges across neighborhoods in zip codes 48209 and 48210.

This activated the Whippet Wipeout Campaign Coalition in September 2020 which mobilized stakeholders representing 12 Drug Free Communities sectors, as defined by the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

To address public concern around nitrous oxide, Coalition members engaged residents to learn about whippet products, accessibility, and health risks.

We learned that:

- whippets are easy to access at party stores, liquor stores, gas stations and online
- whippet charger cartridges are as cheap as \$1-\$2 each
- and people perceive whippets as safe because they are an FDA approved food product

Stores could sell whippets to anyone without any accountability until Detroit City Council unanimously passed an ordinance in November 2021 that made selling or buying whippets for recreational purposes illegal

Whippets are also hazardous to the environment and raise public safety concerns:

- Misuse of nitrous oxide can have potential side effects including dizziness, psychosis, eye, throat and chest irritation, and seizures
- Discarded whippet canisters have been linked to car, bicycle, and pedestrian accidents
- And we have yet to find industry recycling standards or guidelines

With the support of our 4th Precinct, the Whippet Wipeout Campaign Coalition has:

- Visited 123 stores and identified 26 retail outlets that sell whippets
- Developed a nitrous oxide training for officers and first responders
- Became a signatory for the Michigan State Police Angel Program (which diverts people who use drugs to recovery and treatment programs)
- And has safely collected and recycled more than 40k whippets
- We are currently growing our presence online and on social media and have activities planned for National Inhalant Week during the third week of March.

The Whippet Wipeout Campaign Coalition actively supported the Detroit City Council ordinance and supports the legislation pending at the State. Thank you.