

Dante Natoli

Good afternoon everyone, my name is Dante Natoli. I am currently a freshman at Iona Preparatory School and I am a graduate of Saint Theresa Grammar School in the Bronx. I am here to support the three bills to reduce tobacco marketing to young people.

I remember even two years ago as a twelve year old walking around my neighborhood in Pelham Bay, I would notice walls of tobacco products in the same places my friends and I might be looking for gum, magazines, etc. All the discounts and “special offers” made cheap cigarettes seem like something people my age could afford. And just the quantity of marketing everywhere made smoking seem like a normal – maybe even “cool” - thing to do.

Now, I know the tobacco companies are targeting me and my friends. They want us to start smoking and keep smoking – until we die. I have watched family members struggle with smoking, harm their health but still not quit. I won't let that happen to me. I hope the City Council will help make sure it does not happen to any kid.

While I attended Saint Theresa, I worked with a small group to help spread awareness of the dangers of cigarette advertising and marketing. While conducting research on our project, we came across a worker in a local deli who was surprisingly adamant about not selling cigarettes to customers. He explained how he also thought it was terrible that cigarette advertisements had to be right in the faces of the children who came to the deli almost every day.

As we moved on we interviewed the owner of a local pharmacy. He expressed his disgust for some of the chain pharmacies in the area such as CVS and Rite-Aid because of the fact that

they were being hypocritical by selling cigarettes. A pharmacy is an establishment in which medical supplies are carried to better the health and well-being of an individual suffering from a health condition or other problem. However these “pharmacies” sold and advertised cigarettes. I did not understand how an establishment can proclaim that they help people by giving them the medical supplies they need while they are selling cigarettes RIGHT NEXT TO THE DOOR! I do not understand why these establishments partake in the selling of cigarettes. I never have and I never will.

I have noticed troubling things about cigarettes and tobacco marketing during my life. I understand that increasing taxes and therefore the prices of cigarettes helps reduce smoking, especially among young people who are less likely to have a lot of income, but I despise the fact that if someone develops an addiction, the amounts of money accumulate. For example, if someone buys one pack every three days they’re spending about \$100 in cigarettes a month alone! Cigarettes are terrible for people’s finances and terrible for their health.

In conclusion, do not pick up that cigarette. It can be the one that ends your life. We need to protect the kids and young people in this city from these deadly products. Thank you.