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**Matt Holman
Testimony
Joint Committee on Health and Human Services, Maine
Hearing on Legislative Document 1215, “An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco
Products”
April 25, 2023**

Chair Baldacci, Chair Meyer, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify about LD 1215 this afternoon. My name is Matt Holman, and I am Vice President, U.S. Scientific Engagement & Regulatory Strategy for Philip Morris International (PMI). Prior to that, I spent more than 20 years as a public health scientist at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Most recently, serving as Chief Scientist at FDA’s Center for Tobacco Products (CTP) and Director of CTP’s Office of Science.

Until last summer, I spent my entire career at the FDA. It was my dream job. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to join CTP at its creation and help build it. I worked hard toward CTP’s goal to end the death and disease caused by tobacco products. I joined PMI because I am confident that I can be effective in ending the death and disease caused by tobacco products here too. PMI’s goal is to end the sales of combusted cigarettes around the world. This is the same goal that was announced when I was at FDA in 2017. Commissioner Gottlieb announced a comprehensive plan that aimed to move smokers from cigarettes to reduced risk tobacco products. The exact same thing that I am now working to do at PMI.

Tobacco harm reduction itself is a strategy embraced by many health experts, including myself. It acknowledges that many cigarette smokers may not quit and are better off using alternative nicotine products. This strategy has been successfully adopted by a number of public health agencies in other countries, including the United Kingdom and Japan. In fact, the introduction of innovative, smoke-free products in Japan is credited with greatly accelerating the decrease in cigarette sales in the country.

This is important because the United States has approximately 30 million smokers, and smoking remains our nation’s leading cause of preventable deaths. The sooner we can get smokers to quit, the better.

Unfortunately, proposals like the flavored tobacco ban before this body will do more harm than good when it comes to reducing smoking rates. Without flavored options, many smokers will stick with cigarette smoking, a concern backed by research.

I understand that the proposed flavor ban is driven by the desire to eliminate youth initiation of tobacco products. I share this goal. But, the approaches to achieving this goal cannot come at the cost of approximately 30 million U.S. smokers dying unnecessarily. Fortunately, youth

vaping rates across the United States were cut in half between 2019 and 2022. This happened with flavored tobacco products on the market. Approaches other than flavor bans, such as raising the legal purchase age to 21, contributed to this decrease in youth vaping. We should all work to implement such approaches that eliminate youth tobacco use while providing adult smokers with less risky products.

Millions of adults around the world have stopped smoking cigarettes by choosing innovative smoke-free products. This can become a reality in the United States, too.

PMI shares the goal of reducing cigarette smoking, but a flavored tobacco ban is the wrong approach. Instead, governments should ensure adults who smoke can choose from a wide range of alternatives and encourage them to make a better choice for the betterment of the individual smoker and society at large.