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American Academy of Pediatrics



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30 Association Drive, Box 190

Manchester, ME 04351

office: 207-480-4185

www.maineaap.org

Testimony in favor of LD 1215, which would eliminate the sale of flavored tobacco products in Maine -- Sydney R. Sewall, MD Hallowell

Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Meyer and members of the HHS committee:

I am writing as a representative of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, an organization of over 300 health care practitioners distributed throughout the state who focus on the care of infants, children, teens, and young adults.

Stealing a line from Star Trek, our "Prime Directive" is prevention. To that end, we monitor physical and neurological development, and promote early intervention for delays, give immunizations, and provide nutrition counseling. As kids get toward the teen years, we deliver strong anti-tobacco messages.

Our efforts, however, have been successfully countered by the tobacco industry, and the disturbing state and national data on youth vaping illustrates their success. A new generation of citizens are emerging into adulthood addicted to nicotine. Chronic use of this psychoactive substance, whether delivered through vaping or through conventional tobacco smoking, increases the risk of chronic cardiovascular disease and shortens the lifespan. Use in pregnancy has multiple negative effects on the next generation. It is, in essence, a toxin.

We all agree that the nation is not ready for a complete prohibition of tobacco products -- it's too late for the scores of millions of citizens already addicted. This bill targets those products aimed at non-smokers -- in particular our patients -- by appealing to youth culture with specific flavorings, and by lessening the irritative sensations associated with those first inhalations.

The arguments against this bill bring back memories of the arguments used against restrictions on other toxins presented in past legislative sessions. When Fire Marshalls testified against the need for flame retardants in furniture -- minimally effective and releasing carcinogens when burned -- industry representatives argued against the science. When the "Child Safe Products Act" was debated, industry argued that the cost of using alternatives would be unacceptable, and that alternative products would be just as harmful. When stricter water quality standards are proposed, you hear how municipal budgets will suffer and that public health recommendations need "further study."

LD 1215 sends a message to our kids that vaping and smoking are equivalent, and **DON'T START**. The long-term effects of **LD 1215** will include greater productivity, decreased health costs, and improved quality of life. Don't be fooled by the short-sighted manner that fiscal notes get calculated -- the benefit *will* exceed the cost.

Sincerely,

Sydney R. Sewall, MD MPH

Instructor in Pediatrics-- Maine-Dartmouth Family Medicine Residency

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