



LD 1215 An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products

Testimony in Support April 24, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN, I am providing testimony on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations in support of the bills before you today. Northern Light Health member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 8 nursing facilities, air and ground ambulance, behavioral health, addiction treatment, pharmacy, primary and specialty care practices and a state-wide home care and hospice program. Ninety three percent of Maine's population lives in the Northern Light Health service area. Northern Light Health is also proud to be one of Maine's largest employers with over 10,000 employees statewide.

Every day Northern Light Health clinicians and member organizations work to improve the health of the people of Maine. All too often we must focus on the long-term negative health effects of tobacco and tobacco related products consumed since youth by many of our patients. In 2019 the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey reported that:

- The percentage of Maine High School students reporting any tobacco use (including vaping products) in the past 30 days increased from 23.5% (2015), to 29.6% in 2019
- The percentage of Maine middle school students reporting any tobacco use (including vaping products) in the past 30 days increased from 6.3% (2015) to 7.6% in 2019

Medical leaders in Maine and nationally are in agreement, flavored tobacco and electronic cigarettes are harming the health of our children by creating a pathway forward to a lifelong addiction to tobacco.

In February 2019 the Journal of American Medical Association Network published a youth tobacco study – "Association of Electronic Cigarette Use With Subsequent Initiation of Tobacco Cigarettes in US Youths" The study reports that youths whose first tobacco product was an e-cigarette were more likely to initiate cigarettes over 2 years. . At the population level, approximately 180 000 new ever smokers and 45 000 current smokers in the United States over 2 years may have started smoking combustible cigarettes after initiating e-cigarette use Youths whose first tobacco product was an e-cigarette were more likely to initiate cigarettes over 2 years. At the population level, approximately 180 000 new ever smokers and 45 000 current smokers in the United States over 2 years may have started smoking combustible cigarettes after initiating e-cigarette use.

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In 2019, the American Academy of Pediatrics also published an article – “A Public Health Crisis: Electronic Cigarettes, Vape, and JUUL” The article states that electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) and vape devices have rapidly become the most common tobacco products used by youth, driven in large part by marketing and advertising by e-cigarette companies. There is substantial evidence that adolescent e-cigarette use leads to use of combustible tobacco products. Most e-liquid (vaping products) contains a variety of chemical ingredients and flavoring, helping to make vaping an appealing activity to youth. More than 80% of the nation’s youth reported the availability and variety of flavors are their primary reason for using e-cigarettes.

In 2018, Scott Gottlieb MD, FDA Commissioner also reported that menthol flavored products represent one of the most common routes by which kids initiate on combustible cigarettes, the menthol serves as a mask of the unattractive features of smoking that otherwise might discourage a child.

Tobacco related health care costs in Maine are real and they are significant. In March of 2021 Maine CDC reported that \$118 million dollars was spent on health care costs due to smoking. The bills before you today will reduce tobacco-related health disparities and make it less likely that Maine children will try their first tobacco product.

We ask that you support this important legislation.

Thank you.