I am a Maine voter and a taxpayer writing in opposition to LD1215 and LD1174 which would ban the sale of flavored nicotine or tobacco products -- including those that are demonstrably safer than smoking according to the FDA. It should now be clear that such drastic action would cause irreparable harm to the same people it is intended to protect. Moreover, forcing legitimate specialty retailers to close will expose consumers to unnecessary risks including shopping on an unregulated market and even returning to smoking. Data from other states and municipalities where flavor bans have been imposed confirm that this policy is creating new problems while failing to address the issue of youth substance use.

Recent research reveals that young people aren't benefiting from heavy regulation of vapor products. Instead, policies like what LD1215 and LD1174 are proposing are more likely to send teenagers to smoking rather than prevent them from experimenting with nicotine. According to research published in the journal Nicotine and Tobacco Research (Posner H., et. al., 2021), 33% of respondents were likely to switch to smoking cigarettes in response to a flavor ban on vaping. Outcomes like this are counterproductive to achieving genuine public health goals like reducing smoking prevalence in Maine and the rest of the country.

Legal, regulated businesses play a vital role in ensuring that consumers have access to well-made products and keeping adult products out of the hands of young people. If these products are pushed into an underground market where there is no oversight and no motivation to comply with regulations, purchasing and consuming nicotine will be unnecessarily more risky.

I, along with my fellow members of Maine Vapers Association, want to thank you for considering my comments on this issue. Please know that the vaping community are your allies in addressing concerns about youth use and we are open to working toward a positive way forward. I look forward to your response on this issue and I am available for any questions you might have.