

TESTIMONY
LD 1215 – “An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products”

Speaking from experience, I **strongly support** prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products.

There is clear evidence that our youth are drawn to flavored e-cigarettes – the gateway drug that contains the nicotine that can turn them into smoking addicts.

I speak from personal experience. Long before vaping devices, I started smoking menthol cigarettes in high school because it was “cool” and initially I couldn’t stand the taste of straight tobacco. Gradually, as I became hooked, I moved on to unflavored cigarettes, both filtered and unfiltered. Eventually, I was able to quit after about 25 years of smoking, damaging my lungs, endangering others with secondhand smoke, wasting money, and polluting the environment.

The only beneficiaries of flavored tobacco products are the tobacco companies, the cigarette and vaping manufacturers, and the distributors. They conspire to lure people – especially our youth who are acutely sensitive to peer pressure – into vaping or smoking with the hope that they will become lifelong smokers and generate huge profits for their businesses.

Everyone else is a loser.

- The health effects of smoking are devastating. My father and his only sibling, my aunt, both started smoking in their early teens. She smoked until she died of emphysema. He smoked until he was admitted to the hospital for the smoking-related bleeding ulcers that eventually killed him there three weeks later.
- Secondhand smoke is a health hazard, whether in middle school and high school bathrooms, or the “smokers’ alleys” we all endure near the entryways to buildings, or in homes shared by smokers and non-smokers.
- Smoking while pregnant can cause birth defects and miscarriages.
- The cost of cigarettes to feed a smoker’s addiction is appalling. People on low incomes can be stuck having to choose between food, medications or rent and cigarettes.
- The cost of healthcare for addicted smokers is a burden for us all, whether through insurance premiums or taxes.

It is long past time to put the health and well-being of Maine’s citizens first, not the interests of businesses intent on addicting smokers to ensure long-term financial gain at significant cost to all the rest of us.

I implore to you support LD 1215 – “An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.”

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