

In favor of LD 1215, An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco
Ann Tikkanen
Bar Harbor

To Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Ann Tikkanen, I am the CEO of the Mount Desert Island YMCA in Bar Harbor, and I am writing today in favor of LD 1215, An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products. I am proud to have been part of a group of individuals and organizations who spoke in favor of the municipal ban in Bar Harbor last month.

I was hired 16 months ago to provide senior leadership to the MDI YMCA. We employ a highly-trained cohort of caring professionals who work in concert with teachers, educators, and the medical community. The Y team comprises health, wellness and childcare professionals all here to support the well-being of every member of the community, and to help give the children of our community a fair shake at a healthy and productive future. This means teaching them healthy habits and helping to give them the tools to create futures free from addiction.

I have personal experience with addiction in my family, as do so many families in our community and across our state. I have seen lifelong changes to loved ones, addiction with cravings and obsessive use that is incredibly difficult to stop. For all family members (parents, grandparents, sisters and brothers) it is difficult and emotionally and financially draining to be a part of this, sometimes for decades.

So here and now we have a chance to stop one cycle of addiction before it begins, by supporting a ban on flavored tobacco products. We CAN do our very best, as responsible and caring adults, to ensure our children are not preyed upon with the extremely addictive drug found in these products, including flavored tobacco products, namely nicotine.

I believe that the compassion needed to protect our children and to stop at least this cycle of addiction still has a place in government to make it stop.

The data is in. The reckless formulation of and marketing of massive-dose e-cigarettes using juvenile flavors of candy and fruits to lure and addict our children must be called out. The cynical and manipulative marketing practices of Big Tobacco continue. No one has been properly informed by the tobacco industry and our children are the targets.

Isn't it simply common sense to protect the health and long-term well-being of our children? Don't we know enough about the addictive power of nicotine to eliminate this new marketing scheme now in operation against our children? There is no future that is made better for our young people by allowing tobacco companies to addict them to nicotine: helping to keep flavored tobacco out of the hands of our youth has no downsides for them.

To the Committee members and all legislators- you have a moment! You have THIS moment to be a compassionate government on behalf of our children. The State of Maine can be a part of leading the way. We can take a strong position, guided by ethics and data, to help stop the

initiation of youth into tobacco use, with your vote to ban flavored tobacco products across the state. Please vote YES to LD 1215, An Act to Ban Flavored Tobacco Products.

Ann Tikkanen
MDI YMCA
LD 1215

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