

Mike Kelley  
Bowdoinham  
LD 1215

On behalf of the 597 small Maine businesses I supply with legal tobacco products, I am writing to voice my strong opposition to LD 1215, which would ban the sale of flavored tobacco products in the state of Maine. My name is Mike Kelley and I am the President of Core-Mark International's New England division in Gardiner, Maine. Core-Mark's humble beginnings began in 1888 as Glaser Brothers, a single storefront in San Francisco. From there, Core-Mark has grown into one of the largest distributors and marketers of consumer goods in North America.

Our New England division proudly employs over 120 honest, hardworking and tax paying Maine residents. On behalf of them, and as a resident of Bowdoinham, Maine, I am writing to ask that you do not support LD1215 and its ban on the sale of all flavored tobacco, including menthol cigarettes and wintergreen dip. This proposal would jeopardize wholesalers who rely on tobacco as a significant part of their overall sales to support our families, businesses, and provide stable jobs for Maine residents. Furthermore, this bill will punish legal consumers, small businesses, and employees in Maine at a time when they are already battling inflation and it's negative impact on their livelihoods. Banning flavored tobacco products would prohibit adults from purchasing legal, regulated products through licensed store owners and inevitably send more consumers to the illicit market.

By turning business away from law-abiding stores that are well-trained in checking ID's, this proposal would also give Maine youth greater access to tobacco products, an outcome that we all strongly oppose. Maine's well-regulated tobacco industry, which includes strict licensing, age-verification, and tax payments, has contributed to the drop in teen smoking. SAMSHA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health, as well as recent surveys by the FDA and CDC, confirms that youth cigarette smoking, including menthol cigarettes, has declined to historic lows. That means current policies are working and progress is being made. Banning flavors will only empower the illegal market where they do not check ID's, thereby undoing this remarkable progress and punishing those that have maintained strict age enforcement.

If Maine does proceed in banning flavored tobacco products, you should also expect cross border sales. The truth is adults would still be able to buy their flavored tobacco products in New Hampshire, and towns along the border like North Conway and Gorham would see a windfall of cross-border traffic. This is exactly what happened when Massachusetts' flavor ban went into effect in 2020; the menthol cigarette sales in New Hampshire and Rhode Island grew significantly by 59% and 24% respectively. As a result, Massachusetts has lost out on more than \$300 million in tax revenue due to their flavor ban. Why would Maine want to permanently shut off a significant source of revenue that funds important programs and provides consistent tax revenue for the state?

I ask that you think through the devastating impact this proposal would have on the wholesalers, businesses, and residents of Maine before you make the grave decision to advance this bill. Please vote NO on LD 1215.

Sincerely,  
Mike Kelley  
Bowdoinham, ME