

Sunday, April 23, 2023

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

My name is Jay Knowlton. I am a lifelong Mainer, having grown up in Camden, and currently a resident of Portland. I graduated from the University of Maine and earned my Master of Public Health degree from the University of Southern Maine. I currently serve as Board President of Maine Public Health Association, in addition to other volunteer activities in my community. The health of Maine people and places is important to me, and I'm writing to you as a public health professional, and resident of this beautiful state, in support of LD 1215: "An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products."

This bill would end the sale and marketing of all flavored tobacco products, including prohibiting the use of "characterizing" terms, a tactic that has been used by the tobacco industry for marketing purposes and to dodge regulation.

**Maine's next generation is rapidly becoming dependent on tobacco products**, setting them up for chronic health conditions, lost productivity, and economic challenges. For example, from 2017-2019, there was a near doubling in youth e-cigarette use (28.7% vs. 15.3%), with some of the greatest increases seen in Piscataquis (26.6% vs. 6.7%) and Oxford (30.9% vs. 12.3%) counties.<sup>1</sup> Being in my late twenties, I have seen firsthand how flavored tobacco can get people hooked, with many of my friends trying e-cigarettes and now seeing several of them spending a lot of money on them every week, unable to stop despite trying multiple times.

**The costs on our health and health care are significant:** In Maine, smoking is estimated to cost \$811 million in direct health care expenditures, including \$261 million in Medicaid costs, and an additional \$647 million in productivity losses every year.<sup>1</sup> Each year, 2,400 Maine people die from tobacco-related illness.<sup>2</sup>

**Maine voters support ending the sale of flavored tobacco products.** In the spring of 2019, MPHA received funding from Maine Cancer Foundation to conduct a public opinion poll about a range of tobacco-related issues, including ending the sale of flavored tobacco products. The poll found that **a large, bipartisan majority of Maine voters support ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products** (including cigars and e-cigarettes) to prevent youth tobacco use (68% support: 75% Liberal, 67% Moderate, 62% Conservative). I've attached these results to my testimony.

Five municipalities across the state have ended the sale of all flavored tobacco products. The state's inaction to date on this issue is nothing to be proud of, and Maine kids are paying the price. **Data suggest 27,000 Maine kids now under the age of 18 will ultimately die prematurely from tobacco use.**<sup>3</sup>

**We need to act today to create a healthier tomorrow for Maine kids.** Preventing tobacco use is good public health, economic and social policy. LD 1215 promotes public health, and I respectfully request the committee vote LD 1215 “Ought to Pass.” Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2014. [The health consequences of smoking: 50 years of progress.](#) *A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health.

<sup>2</sup>Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. 2020. [The toll of tobacco in Maine.](#)

<sup>3</sup>Projections of revenue, public health benefits and cost savings associated with a \$2 cigarette tax increase in Maine are calculated using an economic model developed jointly by CTFK, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, and Tobacconomics. For more information, see: <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0281.pdf>.

For information about polling methodology, contact Kevin Fay, Critical Insights ([kevin.fay@digitalresearch.com](mailto:kevin.fay@digitalresearch.com))  
All other questions, contact Rebecca Boulos, Maine Public Health Association ([executivedirector@mainepublichealth.org](mailto:executivedirector@mainepublichealth.org))



# Survey of Maine Voters on Tobacco Policies

## Mainers Strongly Support Tobacco Taxes & Ending the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products

Adopting policies that protect Maine youth from tobacco addiction is a high priority for an overwhelming bipartisan majority of Maine voters, according to a comprehensive poll conducted by DRI-Critical Insights. The poll, commissioned by MPHA and funded by Maine Cancer Foundation, demonstrates that Maine people value public health and preventing addiction among Maine's youth.

This is the first poll of Maine voters to be conducted since e-cigarettes were introduced on the market. Of particular note, the survey shows that 85% of Maine voters believe it is important to prevent Maine youth from using tobacco products. Also noteworthy is that strong support comes from men and women; across ages; geography; self-reported tobacco use; and political leaning: Liberal, Moderate and Conservative.

### Poll Highlights:

On other issues, the **poll found that a large, bipartisan majority of Maine voters support:**

- Prohibiting the sale of **all** flavored tobacco products (including cigars and e-cigarettes) to prevent youth tobacco use (68% support: 75% Liberal, 67% Moderate, 62% Conservative), and
- Using tax revenue from an increase in tobacco taxes to prevent youth from starting to smoke or use other tobacco products (70% support: 85% Liberal, 64% Moderate, 54% Conservative).

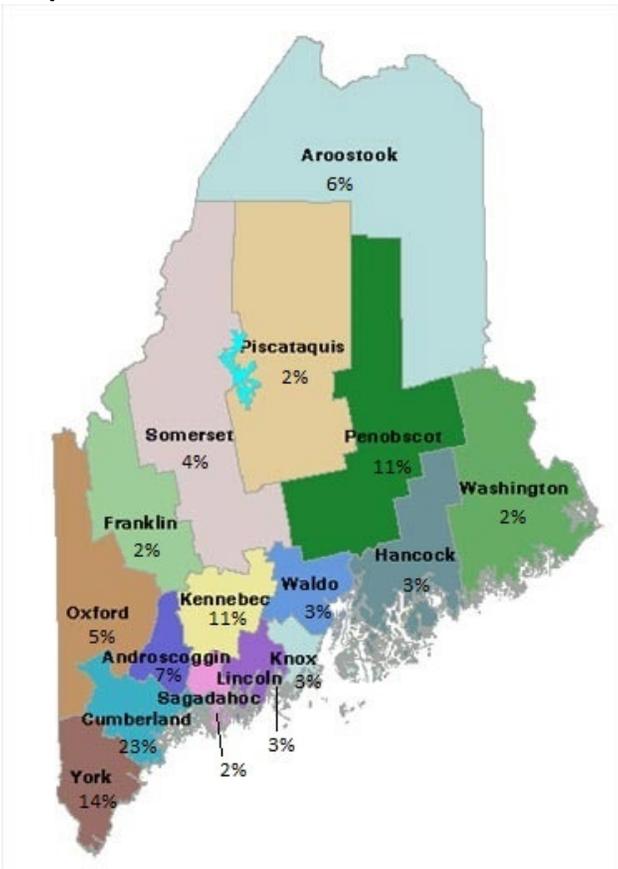
More than 70% of Maine voters don't buy the false claim that e-cigarettes can help cigarette smokers to quit smoking; in fact, nearly the same percentage (73%) believe e-cigarettes, Juuls, and other vaping products increase nicotine addiction among youth and young adults (79% Liberal, 62% Moderate, 61% Conservative).

### Respondents from across political views report leaning favorably toward political candidates that vote to:

- Prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including flavored cigarettes, cigars & e-cigarettes (73% Liberal, 61% Moderate, 61% Conservative).
- Increase the cigarette excise tax (79% Liberal, 54% Moderate, 54% Conservative).

The poll was conducted by DRI/Critical Insights between April 4 and April 15, 2019. Data were gathered online from 450 registered Maine voters aged 18 and older, offering a sampling error of +/- 4.7 percentage points, at 95% confidence. The state was sampled by county population in proportion to the most recent election turnout. Percentage figures rounded to nearest whole number.

## Respondent Profile:



### Political View

45% Moderate  
 21% Conservative  
 18% Liberal  
 8% Extremely Conservative  
 8% Extremely Liberal

### Age

11% 18-24 years  
 22% 25-34 years  
 23% 35-44 years  
 18% 45-54 years  
 15% 55-64  
 11% 65+

### Income

33% < \$35k  
 21% \$35k-\$49,999  
 19% \$50k-\$74,999  
 12% \$75k-\$99,999  
 13% 100,000+  
 3% Prefer Not to Respond

## Tobacco Product Usage Profile

