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Testimony in favor of LD 1215: An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, I am an Orono resident, a pediatrician, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

As a pediatrician in Bangor, I talk with teenagers every day. They tell me that about a third of the kids in their schools are vaping. Vaping is so prevalent that local high schools have had to periodically close bathrooms and monitor bathroom entrances and with security cameras. Kids get around this by vaping in cars, in hallways, and sometimes even in class. Without flavors, this would not be happening.

Big Tobacco claims that vapes and e-cigarettes are produced to help adult smokers quit smoking combustible cigarettes. But flavors like Cotton Candy, Kool-Aid, and Fruit-Loops are clearly designed to appeal only to kids. The number of Maine kids using tobacco products is rising again. This is due to flavored vapes, not traditional cigarettes. Of the kids using any tobacco products, 85% use flavored products.

Flavored tobacco products are marketed and packaged deceptively. Most teens are unaware that the flavored products they use contain nicotine. Almost all vapes do contain this highly addictive drug. Some products have significantly higher nicotine content than a traditional cigarette.

Flavored vapes are marketed to appeal to a wide range of teens, including kids who would not smoke combustible cigarettes.

Flavors Hook Kids. Why should Maine continue to allow the sale of these deceptive and addictive products?

As a pediatrician, I hope to see a generation of kids grow up without the burden of increased heart disease and stroke due to nicotine addiction. Protect your own kids and all Maine youth with a vote FOR LD 1215.

Melissa Burch, MD

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