

April 24, 2023

Health and Human Services Committee

Testimony of Colleen McBreairty in Support of LD 1215

Hello,

My name is Colleen McBreairty and I am writing in support of LD 1215. I live in Allagash, Maine. I just recently turned 71 years old. I started smoking cigarettes when I was 14 years old. Back then anyone who had the money could go into a store and buy cigarettes, no questions asked. As a result, I spent years battling bronchitis, and bronchial pneumonia. This often led to me being hospitalized. The last of which was the most serious. I went into respiratory arrest having come down with a combination of an asthma attack coupled with bronchitis, and pneumonia. I was in intensive care for a week. My doctor told me at that time that if I didn't quit smoking, I would not make it to the hospital again since the hospital is about forty miles from where I live. I was so addicted that my first thought was "that is ok, I will just move closer." I had tried to quit smoking several times before to no avail. I would sometimes go as long as two or three years before something would happen, and I would reach for a pack of cigarettes once again. For some reason this time it worked. I have been smoke free for 21 years in November.

As a former teacher, the health and welfare of children is very important to me. I have seen the damage that flavored tobacco can do and know how hard it is to fight addiction. Although a ban on flavored tobacco under 21 exists, I can tell you with all certainty, kids are very resourceful at being able to still get it. I encourage you to end the distribution and sale of flavored tobacco products in Maine. Please support LD 1215. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Colleen McBreairty