



Lewiston Auburn
METROPOLITAN
CHAMBER of COMMERCE

LD 1215: An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products

**Testimony of Shanna Cox, President and CEO of the Lewiston-Auburn Metro Chamber of Commerce
April 25, 2023**

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

My name is Shanna Cox, I'm the President and CEO of the Lewiston Auburn Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, and I'm writing in support of LD 1215, an Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

Public health and our economic well-being are tied together. As a leading cause of preventable death and disease in Maine, tobacco use is a perfect example of that. Smoking costs Maine nearly \$1.5 billion annually in associated health care expenses and lost productivity [1]. Businesses in the Lewiston-Auburn area, whether they're in manufacturing, food service, or childcare already struggle to maintain adequate staffing. Tobacco use is one more hurdle they have to grapple with to find reliable staff.

Most tobacco users start young—1 in 5 Maine high school students are currently using a tobacco product—so reducing youth tobacco use is a key way to invest in a healthy workforce for our future [2]. In order to achieve that goal, policymakers should take aim at the flavored tobacco products that attract kids. 4 out of 5 young people who have used tobacco started with a flavored product, and surveys consistently show that a primary reason youth use tobacco products is because they come in flavors they like [3]. That's no surprise, with things like cotton candy flavored e-cigarettes, Dr. Pepper flavored nicotine pouches, and menthol cigarettes on the market.

If we end the sale of all flavored tobacco products, we'll help make sure young people never pick up this deadly habit. That's a win for their health, and for the employers they'll work for in the not so distant future. More importantly, when this legislation is passed, it creates an even playing field for owners and operators who want to do the right thing by tomorrow's workforce; but would be at a disadvantage if implementing a store ban individually. Most small corner stores can't afford to disregard this product line, and this bill will help ensure any negative impact to sales is shared.

Without a stable, healthy workforce, businesses can't reach their full potential, which means our communities can't reach their full potential. That's why the Lewiston-Auburn Chamber of Commerce urges you to vote ought to pass on LD 1215.

Sincerely,



Shanna Cox

President and CEO, Lewiston-Auburn Chamber of Commerce

[1] Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, "Smoking in Maine",

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/population-health/data/documents/Smoking-Infographic-030117.pdf>



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[2] Maine Department of Health & Human Services & Maine Department of Education, "Maine Integrated Youth

Health Survey", 2021. <https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/2021-results>.

[3] Ambrose BK, et al., "Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014," Journal of the American Medical Association, October 26,

2015.