

Good day, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Jamie Fey and I am a Pediatric Hospitalist at Maine Medical Center and resident of Portland. I am submitting this testimony in favor of LD 1215, An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

I graduated from medical school in 2011 and have practiced as a hospital-based pediatrician since completing my residency in 2014. I care about the health of my community, and in particular, I care about the well-being of my patients who deserve the chance to grow up healthy and safe. I see first-hand the consequences of tobacco use in my hospitalized patients, both those using it directly and those exposed to its use by family members. Smoking is dangerous to children of all ages, from the increased rate of sudden unexpected infant death in babies exposed to secondhand smoke, to increased rates of serious asthma exacerbations and respiratory infections in older children who smoke or are exposed to secondhand smoke. There is also growing evidence that the use of e-cigarettes is harmful and nicotine exposure at any age is harmful to the health of children, increasing their propensity towards addiction, and having a negative impact on their brain development.

Flavored tobacco products are designed specifically to attract children to their use. In fact, 80% of children in Maine who have used tobacco, started doing so with a flavored product and half of youth who have ever tried smoking, started with menthol cigarettes. This predatory practice is shameful and harmful to the children of our state. Tobacco products, including e-cigarettes are also terrible for the environment that our children stand to inherit, and they deserve better.

I would love nothing more than to see fewer children under my care suffering the consequences of nicotine and tobacco exposure. I encourage you to pass LD 1215 in order to protect the health of our children, our larger community and our environment.

Respectfully,

Jamie Fey, MD

