

Monday, April 24, 2023

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

My name is Leo Waterston. I am a resident of South Portland and currently serve as Vice-President of Maine Public Health Association's Board of Directors. I am writing to you as a public health professional and parent in support of LD 1215: "An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products."

Did you know there are more than 15,000 flavored tobacco products on the market? These flavors include everything from Rocky Road-flavored cigars to Dr. Pepper-flavored dissolvables to Unicorn Frappe on Ice nicotine juice (flavored to taste like raspberries, mangoes, fresh cream, cotton candy, and menthol). [Findings](#) published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* show that the same chemicals used in "cherry," "grape," "apple," "peach," and "berry" Jolly Rancher candies, Life Savers, and Kool-Aid drink mixes are also used in similarly flavored tobacco products. **The tobacco industry is literally selling candy-flavored tobacco.**

In addition to nicotine, these flavored tobacco products contain other harmful ingredients, including ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs. There is evidence to suggest that these particles lead to cardiovascular injury, with links to negative effects on resting heart rate, blood pressure and the cells that line the blood vessels. Bystanders can breathe in this aerosol. E-cigarettes also contain flavorants such as diacetyl, a chemical linked to serious lung disease; volatile organic compounds; and heavy metals, such as nickel, tin, and lead.

Because of the tobacco industry's tactics to target kids and teens, as parents, community members, and health professionals, we are faced with another generation that will die prematurely from tobacco use.

Please don't let the tobacco industry win. Don't let them use flavors to turn Maine kids into "[replacement smokers](#)" (the tobacco industry's term), stepping in as new customers for those who have died from tobacco use. Rates of tobacco use and lung cancer in Maine remain higher than the national average, putting a tremendous societal and financial burden on our state.

I want to end with a [quote](#) from Brian King, Deputy Director for Research Translation at the US CDC Office on Smoking and Health: "The advertising will lead a horse to water, the flavors will get them to drink, and the nicotine keeps them coming back for more. That's the trifecta of factors that have influenced youth use in this country."

Preventing tobacco use is good public health, economic, and social policy. With this bill, you have the opportunity to protect Maine kids from tobacco addiction, advance health equity, and save lives. LD 1215 promotes public health, and I respectfully request the committee to vote LD 1215 "Ought to Pass." Thank you for your consideration.