

LD 1215: An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products
Testimony of David Packhem, Executive Director of Students Empowered to End Dependency,
SEED
April 25, 2023

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: My name is David Packhem, I am the Executive Director of Students Empowered to End Dependency, SEED. I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1215, An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

Addiction for profit became industrialized by big tobacco decades ago, but the general public is still unaware how it works. The “addiction for profit” business model has 3 elements. The first is to promote the idea that the product is safe to use.

As late as April 1994, seven tobacco executives perjured themselves in front of congress when they all claimed that nicotine was not addictive.

The second key component is to make the product more addictive. Worldwide tobacco sales surged in the 70s when big tobacco increased the nicotine content and added chemicals so that human lungs would better absorb nicotine.

Step 3 is to get kids addicted. Tobacco scientists learned and documented in internal memos that teens and young adults are uniquely vulnerable to addiction. Why is that so? A beginner’s brain is aggressively building neural networks for future use and everything that the brain is exposed to, builds new networks, brain programming if you will. Addiction is a youth onset disease and success in the “addiction for profit” businesses requires young customers. Let me repeat myself. Addiction is a great basis for profit, but it requires kids. If you doubt it, let me remind you in their own words.

Brown & Williamson (Kool, Tareyton, Lucky Strike, GPC)

A compilation of internal studies...

“reported on youngsters’ motivation for starting, their brand preferences, etc., as well as the starting behavior of children as young as 5 years old. . . The studies examined young smokers’ attitudes towards ‘addiction,’ and contain multiple references to how very young smokers at first believe they cannot become addicted, only to later discover, to their regret, that they are.”
1980 report, “Apparent Difficulties and Relevant Facts.” Bate

R.J. Reynolds (Winston, Camel, Salem)

“Younger adult smokers have been the critical factor in the growth and decline of every major brand and company over the last 50 years. They will continue to be just as important to brands/companies in the future for two simple reasons: The renewal of the market stems almost entirely from 18-year-old smokers. No more than 5 percent of smokers start after age 24. Younger adult smokers are the only source of replacement smokers... If younger adults turn away from smoking, the industry must decline, February 29, 1984 RJR report, “Young Adult Smokers: Strategies and Opportunities”. Bates No. 17004

Philip Morris (Marlboro, Virginia Slims, Benson & Hedges)

“We are not sure that anything can be done to halt a major exodus if one gets going among the young. This group follows the crowd, and we don’t pretend to know what gets them going for one thing or another . . . Certainly Philip Morris should continue efforts for Marlboro in the youth market. July 1974 Roper Organization report for Philip Morris, “A Study of Smoking Habits Among You

And using nicotine did decline until the industry responded. They changed the method for getting nicotine into young bodies, they invented vaping and way too many kids love it, ask any school principal. America has an addiction problem as more and more companies look for ways to addict our kids and set in motion the addiction ladder that feeds “addiction for profit business.” This is the toxic swamp our youth swim in, among products that are designed to hook them and limit them and diminish them because it’s good for business. It’s time for Mainers to ask ourselves, what percentage of our kids are we willing to sacrifice for these “addiction for profit businesses?”

Thank you.

David Packhem