

**LD 1215: An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products**  
**Testimony of Laura Argitis, North 43 Bistro**  
**April 25, 2023**

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

My name is Laura Argitis and I am the co-owner of North 43 Bistro in South Portland and a partner of Tobacco-Free Maine Works. I support LD 1215 because it's an opportunity to meaningfully curb youth tobacco use and stave off tobacco's negative consequences for families, communities, and businesses across the state.

Tobacco use is a leading cause of preventable death and disease in Maine. Most people who use tobacco start at or before they turn 18 years old, and flavored products attract and hook kids. A recent survey also shows that [more than eight in ten](#) current youth e-cigarette users vape flavored products, with fruit, candy and dessert flavored products as some of the most popular[2]. And according to the [Food and Drug Administration](#), "youth smokers are more likely to use menthol cigarettes than any other age group" [3].

Tobacco addiction damages peoples' health and well-being, and it's an unnecessary strain on employers who already struggle to find reliable staff. Every year, smoking costs Maine nearly \$1.5 billion due to associated health care expenses and lost productivity.

As a restaurant owner, I see firsthand how challenging it is to find and keep staff. Tobacco users tend to get sick more often, which can exacerbate staffing issues. That is the business owner's perspective. However, I'm not just a business owner. I have a family, friends and a community to look out for.

That's why I think it's important to take cues from health experts like Tara Morin, a doctor and family friend who communicated to us the serious nature of flavored tobacco use among youths. Her expertise and knowledge on the issue resonated with our beliefs, and ultimately brought our restaurant on board.

Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products will help promote healthy communities where businesses can succeed.

Please vote ought to pass on LD 1215

Notes:

[1] Ambrose, BK, et al., "Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014," *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, published online 26 October 2015.

[2] Ambrose, BK, et al., "Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014," *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, published online 26 October 2015.

[3] FDA. 2021. "Results from the Annual National Youth Tobacco Survey." FDA, October.

<https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey>.

Laura Argitis,  
Co-owner, North 43 Bistro

Notes:

[1] Ambrose, BK, et al., "Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014," *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, published online 26 October 2015.

[2] Ambrose, BK, et al., "Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014," *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, published online 26 October 2015.

[3] FDA. 2021. "Results from the Annual National Youth Tobacco Survey." FDA, October.  
<https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey>.