

State of Maine | 131st Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
Testimony of Hannah A. Hudson on behalf of Maine Primary Care Association
April 25, 2023

Supporting:
LD 1215, “An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products”
Sponsored by Senator Duson

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Hannah Hudson, Policy and Communications Manager at Maine Primary Care Association (MPCA).

MPCA is a membership organization that includes all of Maine's 20 Community Health Centers (CHCs), also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). Maine's CHCs make up the largest independent primary care network in the state, providing high quality and equitable primary and preventive medical, behavioral, and dental health services for over 200,000 people (1 in 6 Mainers) at more than 70 service delivery sites in all 16 Maine counties.

We support LD 1215 and thank Senator Duson and the other co-sponsors for bringing this bill forward. Passing legislation to prohibit the sale and distribution of flavored tobacco products, including flavored cigars and electronic smoking devices, would be a tremendous step forward for public health in our state. Today in Maine, 33.8% of cancer deaths are attributed to smoking; providing care for those with medical issues directly caused by smoking costs Maine \$942 million every year.¹

Flavored tobacco products are specifically designed to reduce the harshness of products, making them more appealing to new users.² In Maine, 4 out of 5 kids who have used tobacco started with a flavored product. Despite action by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA), flavored e-cigarettes—especially menthol e-cigarettes and sweet-flavored disposables—remain widely available. Our state has rates well above the national average for high school students using tobacco.³ Overall, 4,300 high school students in Maine smoke and 30.2% of high school students in our state use e-cigarettes.⁴

Tobacco use puts our kids at risk. 27,000 kids under 18 and now currently alive in Maine will ultimately die prematurely from smoking.⁵ Prohibiting the sale and distribution of flavored tobacco products is the right choice to make to ensure a healthier future for our state.

On behalf of Maine’s Community Health Centers, we urge you to support this legislation. Thank you for considering our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at hudson@mepca.org with any follow up questions.

Hannah A. Hudson, MA
Policy and Communications Manager
Maine Primary Care Association

¹ Tobacco Free Kids. Accessed here: <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/maine>

² Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults. A report of the Surgeon General. CDC 2012. Accessed here: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK99237/>

³ Flavors Hook Kids Maine. Accessed here: <https://flavorhookkidsmaine.org/>

⁴ Tobacco Free Kids. Accessed here: <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/maine>

⁵ Tobacco Free Kids. Accessed here: <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/maine>