

Testimony in Support of LD 1215: An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products April 25, 2023

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

My name is Danielle Doctor. I am a pediatrician in Portland and a member of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am speaking to you today to testify in favor of the LD 1215, An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

Prior to my medical training, I worked as a health coach in addiction medicine. I experienced the losses of jobs, relationships, and health detriments alongside my clients. I shared with them the frustrations and harsh realities that come with addiction. Unfortunately, addiction is not something someone can predict- it can happen to anyone. Our children are no exception, but the tobacco industry is making it harder and harder for them to resist.

I think we have all walked down city or neighborhood streets and gotten a whiff of something fruity like apple pie only to realize the person in front of you is vaping. Imagine if you are a child and do not know any better.

I have had patients both using these products inside schools. I can tell you about a 5th grader who stole his mother's flavored e-cigarette and brought it to school to show his friends. Another middle schooler, much like other kids, was offered it in the school bathroom and took the opportunity in order to be seen as "cool".

E-cigarette pods contain a much higher concentration of nicotine. One pod is the equivalent of a pack of cigarettes. It is no secret that nicotine is an addictive substance- we have decades of research confirming its harmful effects and shortening of lifespan.

Our most vulnerable populations have become targets of the tobacco companies. It started with menthol cigarettes being marketed to African American communities. Flavored e-cigarette ads are colorful, fun, and sexy to attract the youth and adolescent population. These flavored products hook consumers with something that tastes good. 81% of youth who have ever used tobacco started with a flavored product¹. In the latest 2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey, 84.7% of youth using e-cigarettes are using flavored products. 1 in 4 high schoolers using e-cigs are using them daily². This is the start of addiction.

In banning the tempting candy, fruity or minty flavors, we can halt this vicious cycle. Please stand with me in ending the sale of flavored tobacco products in Maine and protecting our youth from their harmful effects.

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

² Park-Lee E, Ren C, Sawdey MD, et al. *Notes from the Field: E-Cigarette Use Among Middle and High School Students — National Youth Tobacco Survey, United States, 2021*. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2021;70:1387–1389.