

Committee on Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: LD 1215

April 24, 2023

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

My name is Amanda Giasson, and I am resident of Portland, Maine. I am writing to you today in opposition of LD 1215: An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

I have been smoking since I was 15 years old. I started smoking cigarettes because I was constantly around it by my grandparents who raised me. I later on started doing drugs pretty heavily. I am now 7.5 years into my recovery from substance use disorder and have quit smoking cigarettes. I was able to quit smoking cigarettes by starting vaping.

I have experienced a lot of trauma in my life and vaping is a coping mechanism for me. It is the one addictive substance that I still use. In many ways, it is a harm reduction tool for me because I have tried quitting smoking tobacco many times. When I did try to quit, I experienced many health problems, and my doctor had suggested that I work on my underlying stress before I try to quit again.

With vaping, I have drastically cut down on the amount of nicotine I am inhaling and the amount of money I spend. My overall health has improved. I am not coughing, hacking or having difficulty breathing. If flavored vaping products are banned in Maine, I will continue to smoke. The color of the bottle and the flavor are not the reason I smoke. The ban will force me to go back to smoking regular cigarettes or force me to buy elsewhere in states that do not have bans. These states will benefit from the tax revenues that Maine would forgo if this law were to be passed.

This bill could also potentially open the doors to a black-market in which vaping products may be laced with lethal substances. I understand that this bill is trying to prevent kids from vaping but if the demand is already there, it is dangerous to think of our kids smoking black market, unregulated products. Cannabis existed in a black market for decades and it would be naïve to think that youth were not able to access this product just because it was not legal. Regulation allows for product control and increased safety.

Rather than passing a ban, I think energy, resources, and efforts should be focused on helping kids find ways to not need these coping mechanisms in the first place.

Thank you for you time,

Amanda Giasson