

April 25, 2023

To Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

My name is Noah Nesen, and I am a family physician, Board President of the Maine Public Health Association, and a Chief Medical Officer of a major provider in the Bangor area. I am writing in support of LD 1215, “An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products” and appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts with you on this critical question of public health and wellbeing.

Maine and the nation are facing a tsunami of youth vaping and smoking of flavored nicotine and tobacco products, which inevitably results in accelerating rates of tobacco addiction and its attendant costs in human suffering, lost productivity, and lifelong healthcare expenses. The high costs of chronic illness burden not just individuals and families, but our entire healthcare system; and in the case of tobacco use and nicotine addiction, are entirely preventable. Flavored tobacco products are the most recent invention in the industry’s long history of targeting children in order to create habit and then addiction, which sustain their market and profits. We have a responsibility to Maine kids and our communities to stand up to the tobacco industry and get these deadly products off store shelves.

1 in 3 Maine high school students have used e-cigarettes; 1 in 5 are currently using a tobacco product. These rates well above the national average. Meanwhile, 1 in 6 middle school students have done the same, and in all 97% of children who vape use flavored products. In my professional experience I see the impacts of this, including children with breathing problems who find their physical activity limited and children who are unable to stop the use of nicotine even though they would like to quit.

I hope that Maine will make the right decision for the health and safety of our children and lead on a critical public health matter by ending the sale of flavored tobacco products. Our children need our protection so that they can thrive and enjoy long, healthy, and productive lives.

Sincerely,

Noah Nesen, MD