



# Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services, Maine

## *The unified voice for Maine's community behavioral health providers*

Malory Otteson Shaughnessy, Executive Director

### Testimony in Support of LD 1215

### **"An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products"**

**Sponsored by Senator Jill Duson**

April 25, 2023

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Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committees. My name is Malory Shaughnessy and I am the Executive Director of the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services. The Alliance is the statewide association representing the majority of Maine's community-based mental health and substance use treatment providers, providing services to over 80,000 Maine men, women, and children. The Alliance advocates for the implementation of sound policies and evidence-based practices that serve to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our behavioral health care system.

On behalf of the Alliance, I am here today to speak in support of LD 1215, "An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products." You might be asking yourself right now, why is the Alliance for Addiction and Mental Health Services weighing in on a ban on flavored tobacco? And the answer is that this proposal is connected to our mission. The Alliance believes strongly in the need for a robust prevention system in Maine. This proposal is about more than preventing tobacco use by youth, this bill is also a part of our state's need for sound substance use disorder and alcohol use disorder prevention strategies. The connection comes from research on brain development.

**There is evidence that the effect of nicotine on developing brains may also prime greater vulnerability to addiction to other drugs.**<sup>1</sup> In 2016, the U.S. Surgeon General released a report on e-cigarette use among youth and young adults. The report comprehensively reviewed the public health issue of electronic cigarettes and their impact on our nation's young people. Evidence was gathered from studies that included three age groups: (11–14 years); (15–17 years); and (18–25).<sup>2</sup>

"Until about age 25, the brain is still growing. Each time a new memory is created or a new skill is learned, stronger connections – or synapses – are built between brain cells. Young people's brains build synapses faster than adult brains. Because addiction is a form of learning, adolescents can get addicted more easily than adults. The nicotine in e-cigarettes and other tobacco products can also prime the adolescent brain for addiction to other drugs..."<sup>3</sup>

Reducing tobacco use by Maine's young people is an important public health initiative in its own regard because we all already know the dangers of tobacco use. This committee regularly grapples with the costs associated with caring for those who are suffering the repercussions of long-term tobacco use. However, brain development research connecting youth tobacco use and substance/alcohol use disorder makes this proposal even more important. I urge all members of this committee to vote ought to pass on this important proposal. Thank you.

<sup>1</sup> Menglu Yuan, Sarah J Cross, Sandra E Loughlin, and Frances M Leslie. Nicotine and the adolescent brain. *The Journal of Physiology*. 2015 Aug 15; 593(Pt 16): 3397–3412. Published online 2015 May 27. doi: 10.1113/JP270492

<sup>2,3</sup> The US Surgeon General. Know the Risks. 2016. Accessed online: <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/about.html>