

IN SUPPORT OF LD 1550

An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products

Before the Health and Human Services Committee: April 25, 2023

Good Morning, Senator Joseph Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Committee. My name is Angela Okafor. I am a parent of three children. And business owner.

Let me tell you a short story.

Fire erupted in a deserted area of a community and everyone believed someone else whom it affects will put off the fire. And no one ever bothered because nobody was somebody.

But the fire grew wild. It did not ravish somebody. The wild fire ravished everybody.

I am proud of my community for being the first to take a stand against this wild fire threatening the future of our children. And economic wealth.

We cannot say that this is a federal issue. We need to contribute our best in ensuring that this wild fire doesn't consume us by passing this bill to ban flavored tobacco in our state.

Health is the purest form of wealth. That is why, as a mother, I voted in Bangor to protect my children's future.

Data shows that these flavored tobacco is deceptively pushed more into communities of color, eating even deeper into the already struggling communities of color. This is my and my children's community.

Addiction leads to so many other societal vices in the quest to feed the addiction. As a community leader, I have seen first hand, a young black girl who, due to early tobacco addiction, led to her break up from family, ended up homeless and graduated to drugs. That is the culminating effect of addiction generally. Then amplify that for early addiction. Even more for early addiction for a person of color.

Then crime to feed the addiction.

And loss of jobs

Desperation,

Homelessness

And taxpayer dollars to try pulling people who have fallen into this river of destruction.

Passing this bill will take us steps ahead by fixing the reason why people keep falling into this fast flowing river

that sweeps our loved ones into destruction in the first place.

And as a business owner, all hands need to be on deck. That is part of the reason my Bangor business colleagues need a level playing field for all our businesses especially small businesses.

Please pass this bill to protect our children, our economy and general wellbeing

Thank you for your attention. I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

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