



Testimony in Opposition to LD 1558, “An Act to Prohibit the Sale of Tobacco Products in Pharmacies and Retail Establishments Containing Pharmacies”

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and the distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Nick Murray and I serve as director of policy for Maine Policy Institute. We are a free market think tank, a nonpartisan, non-profit organization that advocates for individual liberty and economic freedom in Maine. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on LD 1558.

If there is any doubt of the ineffectiveness and absurdity of modern-day Prohibition, whether on the state level, local level, or individual firm level, please consult the historical literature on the effects of alcohol and drug prohibition in the United States before casting a vote on this bill and others heard today.

Maine Policy Institute's testimony on LDs 1174 and 1215 outlined why the specific policy of banning tobacco products will surely backfire—because it already has in Massachusetts. The economic realities underlying the failure of Prohibition has not changed.

The irony is not lost on us to find self-ascribed progressives, those who fashion themselves champions of the working class and downtrodden minority groups of society, proclaiming to be the saviors of these groups by merely passing a legal prohibition on their preferred products. These bills will do nothing but unnecessarily expose more Mainers to the criminal justice system. Lawmakers like the sponsor of LD 1558 should see that.

This bill, for no other reason, looks to be a simple feel-good measure for certain lawmakers to demonstrate their virtue to deep-pocketed activist groups from California which have bankrolled a massive effort to ban flavored tobacco and other similar products in markets across the nation.

Telling pharmacies like Walgreens, CVS, or Rite-Aid, as well as other businesses with pharmacies within their doors, like Hannaford or Walmart, that they may no longer sell tobacco products, will do nothing to reduce rates of smoking or demand for these products in Maine--for either adults or children.

Noble intentions are not a real solution. Please swiftly deem LD 1558 “Ought Not To Pass” and focus your efforts on reducing the burden of the state government on everyday Mainers. Thank you for your time and consideration.