

Janet T. Mills  
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.  
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
11 State House Station  
286 Water Street  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0011  
Tel; (207) 287-8016; Fax (207) 287-9058  
TTY: Dial 711 (Maine Relay)

February 1, 2023

Senator Joseph Baldacci, Chair  
Representative Michele Meyer, Chair  
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 2157 – “*An Act to Prohibit Tobacco Sales near Schools.*”

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information in support of LD 2157, “*An Act to Prohibit Tobacco Sales near Schools.*”

LD 2157 seeks to prohibit the Department of Health and Human Services from issuing a new or renewed retail tobacco license to a retailer operating within 1,000 feet of a school.

The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) supports this bill as a prevention strategy that aligns with the recommendations at the national level for implementing local policies that reduce availability and marketing of tobacco. The Maine CDC Tobacco Prevention and Control Program works in partnership with community networks, healthcare providers, schools, and municipalities in effort to prevent all forms of youth tobacco use and provide tobacco-free spaces through policy changes, extensive education, and outreach.

Nearly 1 in 5 Maine high school students currently use tobacco products [18.4%, 2023 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS)<sup>1</sup>]. Prohibiting stores near schools from selling tobacco can reduce youth exposure and youth access to tobacco. Prohibiting tobacco sales near schools has been adopted by other jurisdictions. In Maine, other age restricted products such as alcohol and cannabis have restrictions on retailer distances from schools.

Implementing this policy would require minimal changes to the existing retail tobacco licensing system and would be covered under existing program resources. If enacted, Maine CDC will not issue licenses to tobacco retailers identified as being proximal to a Maine school. The number of current licensees located within 1,000 feet of a school is unknown at this time and the loss of the revenue generated from these license renewals is undetermined.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS) is a biennial survey of Maine students in grades 5 through 12 that monitors health behaviors and attitudes regarding tobacco, alcohol, substance use, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and protective factors. It is conducted by Maine’s Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education. <https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/>

Tobacco retailer density is a school neighborhood risk factor for youth smoking. The Maine CDC supports legislation that ends the sale of tobacco near schools, reducing access and exposure as a way to help prevent young people in Maine from starting to use these products.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions during your deliberation of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Va', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Puthiery Va  
Director  
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
Maine Department of Health and Human Services