

Owen Casas
Maine
LD 2157

Good Afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. I am Owen Casas and, on behalf of the Maine Vapers Association, am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 2157.

Although we understand the intent of the bill is to reduce youth exposure to controlled substances, the "one size fits all" quazi takings proposed in this bill is such that we cannot support it. As we have continued engaging with the state and local municipalities on this subject, it has become increasingly clear how complex this discussion has become. This appears in large part due to an inability for disparate stakeholder groups to collate, assess, review and validate the aspects associated with this decision... in plain speak: cherry picking certain facts to tell a story leaves important pages out of the book.

The Maine Vapers Association is more than willing to participate in working groups, work sessions, study commissions or any other format where all relevant stakeholders can provide input. A real deep dive so that the legislature, municipal officials and all Mainers have a full and accurate picture of the challenges our youth face today about access, exposure and consumption of nicotine based products.

Below are just a few, of many, questions I believe should be asked and answered before taking any additional steps.

Title 22, subsection 1556-A addresses enforcement of the Retail Tobacco Sales laws throughout the state. In relation to the sales or furnishing of tobacco products to those under 21, how many times in the last fill in the blank years have law enforcement or "contract officers" (non law enforcement officers who are exempt from ongoing training???) enforced the law? How many of those times involved the Attorney General's office? Were the enfracctions brought to court and if so, how were they resolved? Are there any discernible trends that can be gathered from this data? What does this data tell us about youth access to tobacco products at the very stores affected by this legislation?

How many stores would be affected by this legislation? Do we actually know?

The fiscal note states any impact can be absorbed by the department's existing budget. What about the lack of tax revenue? This could be determined by answering the question above "how many stores would be affected by the legislation", applying an average annual sales with related tax per store and punching out the math. "Fiscal impact" includes both expenses and revenues so I very much encourage applying the revenue impacts to your thinking.

I appreciate your time and consideration, and would be happy to answer any questions.

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