

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyers and members of the Maine Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Christopher Beaulier and I am concerned about LD 2157 – An Act to Prohibit Tobacco Sales near Schools. I feel that there are already sufficient laws in place to keep tobacco related products out of the hands of children and believe that this law would take things too far and be detrimental to small Maine businesses.

Studies have shown that the vast majority of tobacco products end up in the hands of children through friends and family, and not through direct sales. As a result, this bill would do nothing to eliminate tobacco from reaching children; rather, it would have a greater adverse effect on the livelihood of businesses that rely on the sale of tobacco as well as the sale of other items that tobacco users purchase when they patronize our businesses.

As someone who works in the tobacco industry, I can assure you that we do everything in our power to keep tobacco out of the hands of children. As an operator of retail tobacco outlet stores we take this responsibility very seriously. Our policy in every one of those shops is that no one under the age of 21 is allowed into the store, additionally ALL purchasers of tobacco products or alcoholic beverage products MUST provide a photo ID in order for us to verify their age. This ‘card all’ policy along with a robust and frequent education policy ensure that our tobacco and other age restricted products are never purchased by underage consumers. Some of the larger issues that I have with this proposed bill are:

1. There is no definition of what a “school” actually is. Does this include pre-schools and daycares or only K-12 institutions that are part of an Administrative School District?
2. There are no provisions for existing retail locations (a “grandfather” clause)

Consider this scenario – a mom and pop convenience store has operated for decades next door to a school. They are located in a small community in a very rural area. They are the only convenience store in town. They have never had a violation nor have they ever sold tobacco or nicotine products to anyone under the age of 21. They lose their tobacco license because of the passage of LD2157. The loss of their tobacco license results in a more than 25% loss of revenue, expenses can no longer be covered, profitability is lost so they must close resulting in the loss of their lifelong business, their investment, and their eventual retirement funds. This is in no way right, just, or fair.

As I stated earlier, none of us want the youths of this state to have access to any tobacco or nicotine products. There are numerous laws that already exist to ensure that does not happen. Enforce the laws that are already on the books today, we do not need more.

I urge you to support Maine businesses by voting against this bill.

Thank you for your time,

Christopher Beaulier

Newburgh, ME