

Good afternoon members of the Maine Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Nicolas Birtz 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. Robust and frequent education and a 'card all' policy ensure that our tobacco and other age restricted products are never purchased by underage consumers. I urge you to support Maine businesses by voting against this bill.

Thank you for your time,

Nicolas Birtz

Columbia Falls, ME