

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Committee on Taxation:

My name is David Jolly, I live in Penobscot, Maine, and I am here today in support of the increase in tobacco taxes included in LD 210. I have a doctorate in public health and worked in the field for 35 years, and I am a member of the Maine Public Health Association. For several years, I was involved in tobacco prevention and control efforts targeting youth and young adults. I have a personal as well as professional interest in this issue. Both my mother-in-law and brother-in-law died of illnesses due to their life-long addictions to tobacco.

Maine has the highest cancer death rate in New England,(1) and lung cancer is both the leading cancer diagnosis and leading cause of cancer deaths in Maine.(2) Tobacco users are 15 to 30 times as likely to develop lung cancer as non-smokers.(3) Most tobacco users begin using before turning 21. We know if we reduce the rates of tobacco use, especially among young people, we will reduce deaths from lung cancer and a host of other smoking-related diseases. And we will save the health care costs associated with those diseases.

We also know that raising cigarette taxes reduces smoking rates. This is particularly true for young people who are more sensitive to price increases than adults. Extensive public health research proves that every 10 percent increase in the real price of cigarettes reduces smoking in young adults by about 3.5 percent and in youth by six or seven percent.(4) When Maine raised its tax on cigarettes 20 years ago, we saw a dramatic decrease in youth smoking

But Maine hasn't raised its tobacco tax since 2005, and except for New Hampshire, our \$2.00 tobacco tax is the lowest in New England and the mid-Atlantic states. Governor Mills proposes a \$1.00 per pack increase on cigarettes and corresponding tax increases on other tobacco products, which she estimates would generate approximately \$80 million in revenue over the biennium. A \$2.00 increase, however, would better align Maine's tobacco tax with that in Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York. It would reduce youth tobacco use even more dramatically, while raising tens of millions of dollars more, which could be targeted to critical chronic disease prevention and tobacco cessation programs.

I urge you to vote Ought To Pass on the tobacco tax increase in LD 210, but I'd ask you to consider a larger tax increase. From both a public health and an economic standpoint it is the right thing, the smart thing to do. Thank you.

1 National Center for Health Statistics. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/cancer\\_mortality/cancer.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/cancer_mortality/cancer.htm)

2 Maine Cancer Registry, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. 2022 Maine Cancer Snapshot

3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/lung-cancer/risk-factors/index.html>

4 See, for instance, Chaloupka, FJ, "Macro-Social Influences: The Effects of Prices and Tobacco Control Policies on the Demand for Tobacco Products," *Nicotine and Tobacco Research* 1(Suppl 1):S105-9, 1999; Tauras, J, "Public Policy and Smoking Cessation Among Young adults in the United States," *Health Policy* 6:321-32, 2004; Tauras, J, et al., "Effects of Price and Access Laws on Teenage Smoking Initiation: A National Longitudinal Analysis," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 8331, June 2001, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w8331>. Chaloupka, FJ & Pacula, R, *An Examination of Gender and Race Differences in Youth Smoking Responsiveness to Price and Tobacco Control Policies*, National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 6541, April 1998; Emery, S, et al., "Does Cigarette Price Influence Adolescent Experimentation?," *Journal of Health Economics* 20:261-270, 2001; Evans, W & Huang, L, *Cigarette Taxes and Teen Smoking: New Evidence from Panels of Repeated Cross-Sections*, working paper, April 15, 1998;