

Testimony of
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LD 210 “An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026 and June 30, 2027”
Submitted Monday, February 3, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, and honorable members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier, and members of the Committee on Taxation. My name is Deborah Deatrck, and I live in Cumberland.

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of the proposed \$1/pack tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products as a public health professional with more 40 years of experience, a founding member and former President of the Maine Public Health Association, and as a longtime member of the [Maine Tobacco Prevention and Control Advisory Council](#). The Council is a nine-member advisory body created under Title 22, § 272, whose purpose is to provide advice to the Bureau of Health (now the Maine CDC) in carrying out its duties under this section and ensure coordination of the program with relevant nonprofit and community agencies and the Department of Education, the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services, the Office of Substance Abuse and other relevant state agencies. Since its inception, the Council has promoted an increase in the state’s tobacco tax as one of six priority measures to reduce Maine’s high rates of disease and death related to tobacco use, improve health outcomes, and reduce health care costs. While the tax increase in the Governor’s proposed budget falls short of the Council’s [recommendation for a \\$2/pack increase](#), it will measurably strengthen and improve Maine’s comprehensive Tobacco Prevention and Control Program and will lead to reduced consumption, improved health outcomes, and lower health care costs.

Currently, I work as a part-time public health consultant, having retired as Senior Vice President for Community Health Improvement for MaineHealth from 1997-2019. While at MaineHealth, I co-founded the Maine Center for Tobacco Independence (CTI), which has implemented free, evidence-based tobacco treatment programs and services to individuals and communities on behalf of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control, for the past 20+ years. In addition to my leadership of CTI, I served as the lead evaluation consultant to the Maine Lung Cancer Coalition from 2019 – 2022, a five-year public- private sector initiative that sought to reduce morbidity and mortality from lung cancer, the leading cause of cancer in Maine.

One of the key questions that the Legislature might reasonably ask is whether the Maine Tobacco Prevention and Treatment Program, and their implementation partner, the Center for Tobacco Independence, has sufficient resources to meet the increased demand for tobacco treatment services that will likely result from a tax increase. A recent [assessment](#) by CTI shows how past increases in federal and state taxes have impacted the demand on Maine’s Tobacco Quitline (only one of many tobacco treatment resources provided by CTI). I urge you to ensure that the tax increase included in the Governor’s budget helps not only to address the current state budget shortfall, but that it adequately funds the increased demand for tobacco prevention and treatment services for ALL Maine people. Thank you for your consideration.