



TESTIMONY of Megan Diver
Vice President
Maine Energy Marketers Association

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON
Taxation
In Support of LD 278**

Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier and members of Joint Standing Committee on Taxation, my name is Megan Diver, I am the Vice President of the Maine Energy Marketers Association (MEMA).

MEMA represents more than 300 members who own and operate 70% of Maine's 1,300 convenience stores. I am here today to voice our Association's opposition to the tobacco tax increase proposed in LD 210.

For years, our members have been integral contributors to the economic well-being of the state of Maine and its communities where they operate. They provide a wide array of products and services that strive to maintain everyday conveniences for consumers, employ hard-working members of the communities, and participate in charitable activities in their towns. Maine convenience stores provide daily food products, sodas, candy, personal necessities, alcohol, snacks, fuel, and tobacco and vapor products. Each product is an important component to their stores' viability to not only survive but to grow.

Maine's tax policies should encourage harm reductions strategies rather than hindering them. Penalizing adults who choose to use tobacco products might impede public health goals by discouraging smokers from switching to less harmful alternatives.

Tobacco taxes are highly regressive and harmful to working class Mainers. Given the current economic challenges and high inflation rates, imposing additional taxes on adult tobacco consumers is burdensome and only make it harder for lower-income adults to afford harm reduction alternatives. Products that do not contain tobacco and only nicotine should not have been added to the law passed by the last Legislature. These products are known as, Harm Reduction Tobacco Products. These products are important to adult smokers. Encouraging reduced harm tobacco product use is good public policy. For adults who smoke combustible cigarettes and struggle to quit, transitioning to less harmful products, like nicotine pouches, decreases tobacco related diseases and reduces state medical expenditures. Nicotine pouches present less risk to adult smokers and should be treated differently than tobacco products.



Limiting reduced harm tobacco products is bad public policy. Nicotine pouch products expose users to lower levels of harmful chemicals which may in turn reduce disease risk. Disincentives via flavor restrictions or regressive taxes potentially harm citizens and do nothing to reduce the health costs and consequences of cigarette smoking.

We ask the Committee to support good public policy and vote in favor of LD 278.

Thank you for your time and consideration.