

Good morning, My name is Christine Peters chief operating officer of the Maine smoke shop and I am testifying today In opposition to a Tobacco tax increase. Maine people already have their backs against the wall with the cost of food and heating. I testified a few weeks ago on behalf of my customers that smoke. Today I would like to do the same. I am not sure if any of you smoke, I am guessing not? Do you know that a pack of Marlboros are over 10 dollars a pack. Do you know that 2.00 of that is already for Maine tax. A carton is over 100.00. I have worked in this industry for 24 years. I can't tell you how many times I have heard if they go up, I quit. The truth of the matter is they never do. They just arrange their finances to continue to smoke. They eat cheaper processed foods, or maybe even go without medication. A couple weeks back someone was asked during testimony if they think that the kids would suffer and that person who does not work in retail said no not at all. I disagree 100%. I have seen kids get turned down for a snack because they didn't have the money, yet they are buying cigarettes.

AS a business owner I am concerned that I am going to lose business to New Hampshire. Maine already has has a higher tax on cigarettes if this should pass it would be 1.25 more per pack. We have a 43% tax already on vape and snuff. That would double. There will most certainly be a black market to deal with. Massachusetts has warehouses full of seized menthol cigarettes.

Smokers are tired of unfair taxes or regulations. They feel discriminated against enough as it is. Please consider a different way to fund your bill.