



TESTIMONY of Megan Diver  
Vice President  
Maine Energy Marketers Association

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
Education and Cultural Affairs  
In Opposition to LD 377**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, 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.

According to the National Association of Convenience Stores, tobacco sales account for 37.8% of all in-store sales. It is a significant contributor to a convenience store's business, which is being increasingly threatened by a growing patchwork of different local tobacco ordinances being passed. For example, in the cities of Brunswick and Portland, well-paid public health advocates convinced the city councils to pass tobacco flavor bans based on false claims that it would stop people from smoking and protect youth from getting their hands on this product. We know that's simply not true. There is no evidence of public health benefits resulting from these bans, but there is evidence that Brunswick and Portland retailers were severely disadvantaged and hurt by the local ordinances in their cities. Increasing a tax in Maine on tobacco products will not reduce the number of tobacco users, it will force tobacco users to buy out of state or online.

Adding new taxes to products these stores sell will affect their bottom line and their employees pockets.



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 an additional tax on adult tobacco consumers will be burdensome and make it harder for lower-income adults to afford harm reduction alternatives.

We ask the Committee to oppose this increase on all tobacco products. Maine consumers and businesses cannot afford this.

Thank you for your time and consideration.