



**Testimony of Maine Public Health Association Neither For Nor Against:
LD 1519: An Act to Create a Stewardship Program for Electronic Smoking Devices and Related
Products**

Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Room 216, Cross Building
Wednesday, April 23, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. My name is Rebecca Boulos. I am a resident of South Portland, and executive director of Maine Public Health Association.

MPHA is the state's oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent more than 850 individual members and nearly 70 organizations across the state. MPHA works to optimize the health of people and places in Maine through advocacy, education, partnerships, and public health workforce development. We are not tied to a national agenda, which means we are responsive to the needs of Maine's communities, and we take that responsibility seriously.

MPHA is Neither For Nor Against LD 1519: "An Act to Create a Stewardship Program for Electronic Smoking Devices and Related Products." This bill directs manufacturers of electronic smoking devices to develop a stewardship program and submit their proposal to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. We want to thank Representative Gramlich and the bill's co-sponsors for uplifting the important public health issue of hazardous waste from tobacco products.

There are more than 15,000 flavored tobacco products on the market, including Rocky Road-flavored cigars and mint and menthol combustible cigarettes. The advent of electronic smoking devices, which use nicotine-containing cartridges, has contributed to the growing problem of waste from tobacco products. Flavored e-cigarettes come in packaging that looks like regular school supplies, including USB drives, highlighters, and pens. Newer products include a video game console in the smoking device.

Tobacco products harm the environment. A [2022 report](#), published by the World Health Organization (WHO), found that the tobacco industry's CO2 emissions are equivalent to one-fifth of the airline industry's carbon emissions, a significant contributor to climate change. The WHO report also emphasized that cigarette filters, which contain microplastics, are the second-highest form of plastic pollution worldwide.

Waste from electronic smoking devices is particularly harmful to the environment because it introduces plastic, nicotine salts, heavy metals, lead, mercury, and flammable lithium-ion batteries into waterways, soil, and to wildlife. E-cigarette waste doesn't biodegrade even under severe conditions. Instead, it eventually breaks down into microplastics and chemicals that flow into storm drains and pollute our waterways and wildlife.

Many popular electronic smoking devices are pod-based with single-use plastic cartridges. These products have skyrocketed in popularity with a 1,000% increase in use among high school students between 2019 and 2020; they remained the most commonly used tobacco product reported in 2021. A [2022 investigative report](#) found that in the U.S., young people throw away five disposable vapes every second. Over the course of a year, that equals 150 million devices, which contain enough lithium to power 6,000 Teslas.

