

Good afternoon Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and members of the committee on Environmental and Natural Resources. My name is Chris Jackson and I am a Maine resident and local business owner. I stand before you today to express my strong opposition to Legislative Document 1519, which proposes a stewardship program for electronic smoking devices. While the intent may be well-meaning, we must consider its implications for our community and our small businesses. The proposed stewardship program would create unnecessary regulations that disproportionately burden small businesses like mine involved in the sale of electronic smoking devices. These establishments are already struggling in a challenging economic environment. Increased operational costs from compliance could threaten our viability, potentially leading to job losses and making it difficult for legal businesses to compete.

It is crucial to recognize that Big Tobacco companies stand to benefit the most from this regulation. By imposing burdens on smaller, non-Big Tobacco businesses, we inadvertently strengthen the market position of these large corporations, allowing them to dominate the landscape. This regulation may serve to consolidate power within an industry already dominated by Big Tobacco.

I would like to highlight that this bill will have no effect on products brought in from other states, including those from the black market. The illicit trade will continue unaffected, undermining any intended positive impact of the stewardship program. It is misguided to assume that additional regulations will deter any illegal activity.

Implementing this stewardship program will also impose significant administrative challenges on state and local authorities. The logistics of managing a new program will require resources that could be better allocated to effective health initiatives and education rather than creating unnecessary layers of bureaucracy.

One of the pillars of our society is individual responsibility. Adults should have the freedom to make informed choices about their consumption of electronic smoking devices. This stewardship program risks infringing on personal liberties, treating responsible consumers as if they cannot make informed decisions.

Additionally, it would be beneficial to start working more closely with business owners and leaders within the vape community to fully understand the market dynamics and the implications of bills like this one. Engaging with those directly involved can provide valuable insights and lead to more effective, informed legislation that supports both public health and economic stability.

We can all agree that having a clean environment is crucial for our overall health, not only for us but for future generations. However, we must also ask the question: what about the environmental impact of traditional cigarette butts? These are a significant

source of pollution, and shifting our focus solely to electronic smoking devices without addressing the well-known issues posed by cigarettes misses an opportunity to tackle a broader environmental concern. We need to consider comprehensive solutions that will effectively address waste from all smoking products.

I urge a reevaluation of Legislative Document 1519. Rather than creating additional burdens for small businesses, inadvertently empowering Big Tobacco, failing to address the black market, neglecting valuable industry insights, and missing a chance to address broader environmental issues, let us focus our efforts on practical solutions that promote fairness and competition in the market. Thank you for your time, and I urge you to oppose this legislation. Together, we can find better solutions.

Thank you,

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