

Testimony of Nate Cloutier

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services
May 13, 2025

Neither for Nor Against LD 1938, “*An Act Regarding the Regulation of Tobacco*”

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Nate Cloutier, and I am submitting comment on behalf of HospitalityMaine, representing Maine’s restaurant and lodging industries, neither for nor against LD 1938, “*An Act Regarding the Regulation of Tobacco*.”

Our comments are focused specifically on the portion of the bill that would repeal the current exception allowing smoking in hotel and motel rooms.

At the public hearing the bill’s sponsor mentioned being in contact with our organization and noted that, in his words, “we don’t love it, but we’re not going to fight it.” I believe that is nearly a direct quote of what I said to Representative Moonen.

Earlier this year, we surveyed our membership and found that an overwhelming majority of our lodging properties already prohibit smoking in guest rooms. As such, this proposed change would have little to no impact on most of Maine’s lodging businesses that we surveyed. However, our members support retaining the existing legal allowance to offer designated smoking areas outdoors on their property.

That said, the committee may want to consider the potential impact on economy lodging properties across the state, including those that may not be members of HospitalityMaine. Some of these businesses still may permit smoking in certain rooms. If this bill passes, those rooms would likely need to be significantly refurbished to make them acceptable to nonsmoking guests, or they may go unused entirely. This could impose a financial burden on properties that may not have the capital available to make such changes quickly.

With that in mind, the committee may wish to consider a delayed implementation date, perhaps to January 2028, to give these properties adequate time to adjust or renovate as needed.

Additionally, I was asked to convey that many of our members have expressed concern about the accumulation of mandates from Augusta in recent years. Many feel that increasing regulations are making it more difficult to operate and grow their businesses. They urge legislators to consider ways to support business flexibility and resilience

For those reasons, we are neither for nor against LD 1938. Thank you for consideration of our perspective. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Nate Cloutier

E: Nate@HospitalityMaine.com

P: (207)577-8081