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January 7, 2026

Hon. Henry Ingwersen, Senate Chair
Hon. Michele Meyer, House Chair
Committee On Health and Human Services
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

RE: LD 1658, *An Act To Preserve and Strengthen The Fund For A Healthy Maine*

Greetings, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer and esteemed members of the Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services:

I am writing today in support of LD 1658, *An Act To Preserve And Strengthen The Fund For A Healthy Maine*. Maine's youth health demands that the tobacco use prevention and cessation programs supported by the Fund for Healthy Maine continue. Tobacco and nicotine containing products remain popular among Maine youth. As of 2023, the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey found that 17% of Maine highschoolers had used a tobacco product in the last 30 days. Of those high school students who had used a tobacco product in the last year, 43% had tried to quit.

However, Maine's youth are being continuously exposed to new products with a variety of delivery systems and appealing flavors. Nicotine pouch use has expanded throughout the country and in Maine schools. Use of electronic nicotine delivery systems or "ENDS" products such as vapes and e-cigarettes has also expanded. These products offer higher nicotine concentrations in addition to appealing packaging and flavors. Maine must continue to provide kids with the resources needed to prevent nicotine addiction and to stop any use before a lifelong habit is formed.

LD 1658 seeks to ensure that the Fund for a Healthy Maine has enough funding to continue the important work of tobacco use prevention and cessation. Currently, the main source of funding for the Fund for a Healthy Maine is the annual Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement payment. This annual payment, based in large part on the number of cigarettes sold nationally, is projected to decline annually. These payments do not consider tobacco products other than cigarettes, such as ENDS or nicotine pouches. While the current payments into the Fund for a Healthy Maine do not necessarily address the harm caused by ENDS products and nicotine

pouches, this Legislature has increased the tax applicable to these other tobacco products to be closer to equivalent to the tax on cigarettes. The tax increase plays an important role in both prevention and cessation. It is fitting that a portion of the revenue raised be applied to furthering tobacco and nicotine prevention and cessation efforts.

I support LD 1658's transfer of tobacco and cigarette tax revenues to the Fund for a Healthy Maine to continue the important public health work of preventing tobacco related addiction, disease, and death in the next generation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Aaron M. Frey
Attorney General

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