

William H Call Jr
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RE: LD 2134: An Act to Create an Exception to the Prohibition of Tobacco Sales in Retail Establishments Containing Pharmacies for Certain Small Grocery Stores

To: State of Maine HHS Committee: Senator Ingwersen - Chair, Representative Meyer - Chair, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

Dear Committee Members,

My name is William Call. My family has operated our smaller hometown grocery store since November 1981. We partnered with another local Maine business some 20 years ago in Community Pharmacy. They presently lease a completely independent space within the walls of our grocery store.

I am writing to respectfully request your consideration regarding the recently passed law that prohibits stores with pharmacies from selling tobacco products and adopting LD 2134 as a balance to the current law to take place on April 1, 2026. As an owner with a vested interest in both the health of our community and the viability of local businesses, I believe there are important factors that warrant thoughtful review and possible adaptation of this regulation.

We fully understand and support the public health intentions behind this law. Reducing tobacco use is a critical goal, and pharmacy areas should remain dedicated to health and wellness. However, many stores with pharmacies—such as supermarkets and large retail chains, serve as essential community hubs, offering access to a wide range of products and services. Prohibiting tobacco sales solely because of a pharmacy counter can disproportionately impact these businesses, especially compared to similar stores without pharmacies that can continue to sell tobacco.

Furthermore, this regulation may unintentionally drive consumers to less regulated outlets or online sources for tobacco products, which could undermine both public health oversight and local business revenue. It is also important to consider the economic consequences for

stores that rely on tobacco sales as a part of their business model, particularly in challenging retail environments.

In light of these considerations, I respectfully propose that the law be adapted to strike a balance between advancing public health and supporting local businesses. Possible adaptations could include:

- Allowing tobacco sales in stores with pharmacies, provided that tobacco products are kept in a separate, clearly designated area away from the pharmacy section.
- Implementing enhanced age-verification and compliance checks to prevent youth access in these establishments.
- Offering incentives for stores that implement educational programs about tobacco cessation at the pharmacy counter.

We believe that with thoughtful adjustments, it is possible to uphold the intent of the law while minimizing unintended negative impacts on businesses and consumers. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further and collaborate on practical solutions.

Should there be no exception to this law established our current pharmacy may have to face closure or, at the very least, significant rent increases to accommodate the loss of tobacco sales in our grocery store. This is not a good alternative for our store, the pharmacy, or the community that we serve.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

William H. Call Jr.

President

Call's Foods, Inc.