

Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and member of Health And Human Services Committee thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm here to speak in opposition to LD1174.

My name is Chris Jackson and I own several tobacco specialty stores here in the state of Maine. I'm not only a business owner here in Maine, I'm also a consumer and resident. I strongly urge you to oppose this Bill. If the purpose of this bill is to protect the youth I believe it will have the opposite effect. I have seen first hand the extent of how far people are willing to go to obtain their desired products of choice. I've seen countless out of state consumers willing to drive and make bulk purchases. Many of our out of state or city sales reps have seen many people being arrested for selling tobacco products where cities or states have banned them. No doubt this bill will give birth to a large unregulated market we have not seen the likes of since prohibition. A perfect example of this market is the individual who was arrested for selling tobacco and THC products out of their home to kids as young as 12 or 13. I believe the best way to combat this issue is good education and strict enforcement.

I've taken a good look around this room and I see the same usual suspects pushing their agenda. I try and stay optimistic that I stand before you speaking today in hopes some sort of spark will go off inside your heads realizing there needs to be more good conversation and communication amongst you the consumers, business owners and groups that represent us. But up until now I have seen very little willingness with this committee to engage with the industry leaders business owners and consumers to find common ground. I am however, hopeful at a state level there will be more substantial debate than we have seen at our local levels.

We live in a state where marijuana is legal, gambling is readily available and marketed as a way to earn a quick buck and flavored alcohol is in every corner store. Anyone who engages with these products know there is some level of risk involved. The fact of the matter is vaping is no different. I've seen and discovered first hand how well vaping works as a harm reduction tool when used appropriately. Make no mistake about it I do not represent big tobacco I represent small business and vape products.

What concerns me the most about this bill is the blatant disregard for our rights as adults and free citizens to make choices. This committee is acting like a hammer chipping away at our rights, and whether you use these products or not this bill should be alarming to you. What kinds of things do you like or use that will be on the chopping block next? It's this constant shifting base line that we all get use to and think to ourselves well at least we have this or that left. But in all honesty I'm sick and tired of our rights being infringed upon and chipped away at.

This committee has a very large complex issue at hand in front of them. But I ask that you all look through the confusing statistics, loss of business, and jobs, focus more on the rights of the people you represent. At its core this bill is one of the biggest intrusions on free Mainers' rights to make choices. It's an attack and mockery of our democracy. I urge you to oppose this bill and protect our freedoms. I don't think anyone here should be compromising democracy or our freedoms.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions to me at
psavchris@yahoo.com