

Support of Ending the Sale of Flavored Tobacco

Senator Baldacci Representative Meyer and Health and Human Services Committee

As a resident of Maine an advocate for the American Heart Association I **am supportive of the *Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.***

The use of tobacco products remains the nation's number one cause of preventable death and in Maine it is no different. Our youth are most at risk because of flavored tobacco. More than 27,000 kids will die prematurely from smoking if we don't act to protect them.

Tobacco companies are targeting youth with flavored tobacco products. Products that come in array of kid friendly candy and fruit flavors and are sold in colorful packaging that is designed to attract tweens and teens. Tobacco companies uses flavor to hook a new generation of kids on its deadly products. Flavors hide the bad taste of tobacco and make it easier for kids to try. Menthol has the additional quality of soothing the irritation of combustible cigarettes, which is why so many young people start smoking using menthol cigarettes.

As a person growing up in a household with a smoker, I have long been against smoking of any kind as I have witnessed firsthand the damage it could do. My mother, Mary Ellen died at age 59 of pancreatic cancer. She was a heavy smoker throughout her life. While I think she probably enjoyed her time there is no doubt it was cut way to short, and she missed a lot – including meeting and seeing her three grandchildren. She began young and had there been more regulations in place, who knows how it might have turned out? I am sure though she would not have contracted that nasty, nasty disease. Therefore, we must not condone what these tobacco companies are doing. Targeting our youth is disgraceful, period. And they are. As the father of three children who have graduated High School in the past five years, I have heard the stories and in fact witnessed many of their classmates from middle school through high school smoking and vaping. One of their friends suffered a lung issue due to the amount he vaped. A solid ballplayer could play no more. When I have confronted these kids, I am told access is easy (can order by mail) and there are "cool flavors".

In short, we must do everything in our power to keep our communities healthy and safe and you have an opportunity for making sure that Maine residents are healthy and safe against the harms from tobacco by voting to eliminate all flavors in all products.

Sincerely,

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