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Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Joe Anderson. I am a resident of Portland, a hospital-based pediatrician, and I sit on the board of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am writing today to express our strong support of *LD 1215: An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products*.

The damaging health effects of tobacco use are well-known. Despite this knowledge, tobacco use among Maine youth has risen 25% since 2015, and 29% of high-school students report using e-cigarettes, a rate that has nearly doubled in the past two years. 4 out of 5 kids who have used tobacco started with a flavored product, with names like Cherry Crush, Pop Tart, and Cotton Candy. The tobacco industry knows that 95% of adult smokers start by age 21, and it's clear that they are continuing to use flavored products and other deceptive practices to target our adolescents and lock in addicted consumers for years to come. Evidence shows that e-cigarette use among adolescents increases the risk of traditional cigarette smoking.

Moreover, many people have a misguided belief that e-cigarettes are not harmful, as they don't require combustion of tobacco to deliver nicotine. In my work as a pediatric hospitalist, I regularly see the effects of nicotine use – whether from traditional or e-cigarettes – on newborn infants. Pregnant moms who use these products have an increased risk of dangerous complications, often causing many of them to deliver prematurely. In fact, research suggests that nearly 15% of preterm births can be attributed to tobacco use. Even if born full term, these infants are often delivered with a low birth weight, leading to problems with feeding and blood sugar control. These complications can lead to prolonged NICU stays and increased healthcare costs, as well as long-term health issues in the affected children.

We often think of tobacco addiction as an adult problem. In fact, tobacco use is a *pediatric* epidemic, as nearly 90% of adults who become addicted to tobacco products start using before 18 years of age. The Maine American Academy of Pediatrics strongly supports ending the sale of flavored tobacco products statewide, and we're proud of the numerous communities across the state that have passed their own local policies in this regard. **We urge you to vote Ought to Pass on this piece of legislation which would take great strides in improving child health and reducing youth smoking rates in Maine.**

Respectfully,

Joe Anderson, DO, FAAP

Co-Chair, Advocacy Committee

Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics