

LD 1215: An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products
Testimony of Larry Scola, Better Fit Fitness Center
April 25, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

My name is Larry Scola and I own Better Fit Fitness Center in Standish. I'm also a member of the Tobacco Free Maine Works business coalition. I support LD 1215 because it's in line with my mission as a business—keeping people in my community healthy.

Tobacco use is a leading cause of preventable death and disease in Maine. Most people who use tobacco start at or before they turn 18 years old. Flavored products are a major driver of youth use [1]. A recent survey also shows that more than eight in ten current youth e-cigarette users vape flavored products, with fruit, candy and dessert flavored products as some of the most popular

I personally support ending the sale of flavored tobacco products in Maine because...
First off, I know the dangers of tobacco use at a young age and how it affects not just yourself, but the loved ones around you. It's so hard to understand and bear when it's someone close to you, like my mother. My mother became addicted to tobacco in high school, like so many kids do. She passed away from lung cancer 2 years ago, leaving a husband, myself and my sister and her granddaughter. She's a big reason why I'm here. I've always wished there was a way to reduce youth smoking. Maybe I could spare someone the anguish that I, and my family went through.

When I was younger smoking was more of a normal thing. Ashtrays were at every table at a restaurant. Smoking was allowed on planes. Advertising was driving towards kids with cartoon characters smoking. In the 90's legislature passed bills from targeting kids and reducing 2nd hand smoke, Now a new wave of tobacco products are so wide spread with our youth. Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products, thereby intervening at the critical juncture when most tobacco users are likely to start, is an opportunity to make the change I'm seeking.

Secondly, I already promote wellness and helping people live a healthy lifestyle at my gym. I strive to create a gym for everybody and every body. These values are not confined to the gym's four walls. Everyone in Maine is just as deserving of the opportunity to attain good health and preserve it the best they can. Flavored tobacco is robbing our youth of that chance.

Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products will help promote healthy communities where businesses can succeed.

Please vote ought to pass on LD 1215

Larry Scola,
Owner, Better Fit Fitness Center

Notes:

[1] Ambrose, BK, et al., "Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014," *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, published online 26 October 2015.

[2] Ambrose, BK, et al., "Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014," *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, published online 26 October 2015.

[3] FDA. 2021. "Results from the Annual National Youth Tobacco Survey." FDA, October.
<https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey>.