

## Testimony of Julia Ryan, LD 1215, April 25, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Julia Ryan, I'm a senior at Bonny Eagle High School in Standish and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1215, An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

Flavored tobacco use is rampant in my high school. When I walk into the bathroom I see people huddled in large groups, with vape clouds floating around them that have a sickly sweet smell. Despite my teachers' best efforts to monitor the bathrooms, I always dread having to go to the restroom during school.

I've seen close friends, kids I've known since I was 5 years old, derail their lives after getting addicted to e-cigarettes. One was a long time athlete who had to quit all of the sports he used to play because his lungs couldn't handle it anymore. Being active, playing sports and going to the gym was something that always bound my friends and I together. But the ones who use tobacco aren't interested in exercising anymore—pretty much all they want to do now is hang out and party.

Many of my peers that use e-cigarettes don't even realize the products have nicotine in them and are highly addictive. They think vaping is harmless. Flavors like cherry, cotton candy or spearmint make e-cigarettes and other tobacco products more appealing because kids don't want the harsh taste of tobacco. And if you get sick of one flavor, there are thousands more to choose from.

This isn't just a problem in my school. 1 in 5 Maine high school students are currently using a tobacco product, and that rate is above the national average [1].

Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products will help keep a generation of kids healthier and happier. Please do your part to prevent youth tobacco addiction. Vote yes on LD 1215.

Sincerely,  
Julia Ryan

[1] Maine Department of Health & Human Services & Maine Department of Education, "Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey", 2021. <https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/2021-results>.