

**LD 1215: An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products**  
**Matthew Wellington, Public Health Campaigns Director for PIRG**  
**April 25, 2023**

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

My name is Matthew Wellington, I'm the Public Health Campaigns Director for the non-profit consumer advocacy group PIRG (the Public Interest Research Group) and a Brunswick resident. I'm testifying in favor of LD 1215, an Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States [1]. It kills 2,400 Mainers annually and the impacts of tobacco addiction ripple throughout generations of families [2]. LD 1215 would help break that cycle of addiction and harm by ending the sale of flavored products that entice kids into initiating tobacco use.

1 in 5 Maine high school students are currently using a tobacco product [3]. In 2019, former Deputy Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Office on Smoking and Health, Dr. Brian King, summed up the role that flavors play in increasing youth tobacco use when he said, "the advertising will bring a horse to water, the flavors will get them to drink, and the nicotine will keep them coming back for more.[4]" The data paint a stark picture—4 out of 5 kids who have used tobacco started with a flavored product [5]. Whether it's an e-cigarette, cigar, cigarette or nicotine pouch, surveys show that flavors play a prominent role in youth tobacco use.

In 2019, a study showed that among middle and high school students who currently used tobacco, nearly 70% reported using at least one flavored product [6]. Other research shows that less than 40% of adults over 44 years old use flavored tobacco products [7]. Flavored products are targeted at and used primarily by kids, not adults. Many states and communities that have passed policies similar to LD 1215 have seen positive results in reducing youth tobacco use.

Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products is a critical step toward protecting Maine's kids and breaking the cycle of tobacco addiction. It's also a way to invest in a healthy workforce for Maine's future. Please vote ought to pass on LD 1215.

Sincerely,  
Matthew Wellington  
PIRG

## Sources:

- [1] U.S. Food and Drug Administration, "Health Effects of Tobacco Use", accessed April 25, 2023, <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/public-health-education/health-effects-tobacco-use>.
- [2] U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Extinguishing the Tobacco Epidemic in Maine", accessed April 25, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/stateandcommunity/state-fact-sheets/maine/index.html>.
- [3] Maine Department of Health & Human Services & Maine Department of Education, "Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey", 2021. <https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/2021-results>.
- [4] CDC, "Tobacco Use by Youth is Rising", February 11, 2019.
- [5] Ambrose BK, et al., "Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014," Journal of the American Medical Association, October 26, 2015.
- [6] CDC's Office on Smoking and Health, "Summary of Scientific Evidence: Flavored Tobacco Products, Including Menthol," February 2021.
- [7] The Truth Initiative, "Flavored tobacco use among youth and young adults," accessed April 25, 2023, <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/emerging-tobacco-products/flavored-tobacco-use-among-youth-and-young-adults>.