

LD 1215: An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products
Kandra Ayotte-Foster, Senator Inn and Spa in Augusta
April 25, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Kandra Ayotte-Foster and I am the Spa Director and General Manager of the Senator Inn and Spa in Augusta. I'm also a partner of the Tobacco Free Maine Works business coalition. I'm testifying in favor of LD 1215, An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

My business is imbued with a dedication to rest, relaxation, and well-being that starts with our guests but also extends to our staff. We send guests back into their lives refreshed, recharged, and better able to participate in their communities. Tobacco addiction derails peoples' lives, undermines our communities, and negatively impacts businesses like mine. That's why I'm here today urging the committee to end the sale of flavored tobacco products that appeal to kids and set them down the path of addiction.

1 in 5 Maine high school students are currently using a tobacco product [1]. If a young person gets hooked on tobacco, it's a detriment to their long term health, and to the businesses who will eventually employ them. For example, smoking costs Maine nearly \$1.5 billion annually in associated health care expenses and lost productivity [2].

Running a business is hard. The last thing you want to worry about is having adequate staffing to give your customers the high quality experience they deserve. Because tobacco users are generally less healthy, they tend to miss more work, which puts added stress on day to day operations.

Reducing youth tobacco use is a way to invest in the health and well-being of our young people. That's reason enough to act. As a cancer survivor, I wouldn't wish that struggle on anyone. It's just an added benefit that if young people aren't tobacco users, then by the time they enter the workforce, they'll also be more reliable, and productive employees.

Let's end the sale of all flavored tobacco products. Please vote yes on LD 1215.

Kandra Ayotte-Foster ,
Spa Director/ General Manager, Senator Inn and Spa

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

[2] Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, "Smoking in Maine", <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/population-health/data/documents/Smoking-Infographic-030117.pdf>