

April 25, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and Health and Human Services Committees

Support of LD#1558 “An Act to Prohibit the Sale of Tobacco Products in Pharmacies and Retail Establishments Containing Pharmacies”

Dear Senator Baldacci, Representatives Meyer, and members of the Committee

The American Heart Association is the nation’s oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke, whose mission is to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. We are supporting LD#1558 “An Act to Prohibit the Sale of Tobacco Products in Pharmacies and Retail Establishments Containing Pharmacies”

The use of tobacco products remains the nation’s number one cause of preventable death. Tobacco use is responsible for nearly 1 in 5 deaths nationwide and in Maine, nearly 1 in 5 adults smoke cigarettes, the highest rate in the Northeast.ⁱ More than one in 15 Maine high school students smoke cigarettes, with a high of 1 in 8 in Washington County.ⁱⁱ In recent years, overall youth tobacco use in Maine has skyrocketed, largely driven by the youth e-cigarette use epidemic. One in 2 Maine high school students and 1 in 6 middle school students have used e-cigarettes.ⁱⁱⁱ Nearly 30 percent of high school students are current users of e-cigarettes, nearly doubling from 15% in 2017.^{iv}

LD#1558 would prohibit the sale of tobacco products within a healthcare facility. There is a contradiction in profiting from the sale of tobacco, the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, in the same setting in which health care is provided. This bill would ensure that all healthcare professionals and institutions promote public health by not selling tobacco products, which cause serious illness and death among users. The US is the only place in the world where tobacco products are sold in pharmacies. Community pharmacists are one of the most trusted health care professionals and are an important part of the health care team. As part of our health care delivery system, pharmacies, like hospitals and clinics, should be prohibited from selling tobacco products. It is a conflict of interest for pharmacies, providers of health care, to profit from the sale of harmful products known to cause cancer, heart and pulmonary diseases.

The goal in removing tobacco products from pharmacies is to denormalize these products and send a clear message that health care facilities do not promote tobacco use. Smokers trying to quit can go into a pharmacy knowing they will not have to see tobacco products sold next to cessation treatments designed to help their efforts to quit.

Tobacco-Free Pharmacy laws have been spreading around the country. CVS ended the sale of tobacco products years ago, along with many independent pharmacies in Maine. In addition, in July 2020, Hannaford announced it would phase out sales of tobacco products in all its stores in

the Northeast^v and in March 2022, Walmart announced it would stop selling tobacco products in some of its stores across the nation.^{vi}

We urge you to vote “ought to pass” on LD 1558. We appreciate your time and consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,
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i Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health. BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data [online]. 2019. [accessed Feb 09, 2021]. URL: <https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/>.

ii Maine CDC, 2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS), <https://data.mainepublichealth.gov/miyhs/>.

iii Ibid.

iv Maine CDC, 2017 and 2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS), <https://data.mainepublichealth.gov/miyhs/>

v <https://www.bangordailynews.com/2020/07/15/business/hannaford-to-stop-selling-tobacco-products-in-all-stores-in-the-northeast/>

vi <https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/28/business/walmart-cigarettes-sales-retail/index.html>