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LD 2157: An Act to Prohibit Tobacco Sales Near Schools

Testimony of Rep. Matt Moonen, Portland

Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. I am here today to present LD 2157: An Act to Prohibit Tobacco Sales Near Schools.

This bill is incredibly simple, and it does exactly what the title suggests: it prohibits the department from issuing a retail tobacco license to a retailer located within 1,000 feet of a school.

The reason for this bill is also simple: we all know the history of tobacco companies marketing their products to kids and teens. From ad campaigns to product placement to cartoon characters, Big Tobacco has spent big bucks on getting kids to start smoking. These tactics are grossly deceptive and gloss over the fact that tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. The truth is that the only way the tobacco industry can make up for the adults who die from tobacco-related disease is to have kids start smoking. Every day, close to 1,000 youth under age 18 will smoke their first cigarette and close to 100 kids and teens who had previously been occasional cigarette smokers become regular daily cigarette smokers.

You may be wondering whether there is any precedent for an idea like this, and there is: we already have laws on the books that prohibit sales of marijuana and alcohol near schools. This bill would simply expand that to include tobacco.

I know there are lots of proposals out there about how to address the tobacco industry's targeting of kids, and I know we don't all agree on those proposals. But it is my hope that we can agree that keeping tobacco products away from easy access to our schools makes sense.

Thank you for your time and attention, and I hope you will join me in supporting this bill.