



Maine Medical  
Association



**TESTIMONY OF THE MAINE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

**AND**

**THE MAINE OSTEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION**

**IN SUPPORT OF**

**L.D. 2157, An Act to Prohibit Tobacco Sales near Schools**

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
Room 209, Cross Building, Augusta, Maine  
Thursday, February 1, 2024

Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Anne Sedlack, and I am the Director of Advocacy for the Maine Medical Association. I am submitting this testimony in support of LD 2157, An Act to Prohibit Tobacco Sales near Schools on behalf of the Maine Medical Association and the Maine Osteopathic Association.

The Maine Medical Association (MMA) is a professional organization representing more than 4,000 physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine. MMA's mission is to support Maine physicians, advance the quality of medicine in Maine, and promote the health of all Maine people. The Maine Osteopathic Association (MOA) is a professional organization representing more than 1,200 osteopathic physicians, residents, and medical students in Maine whose mission is to serve the Osteopathic profession of the State of Maine through a coordinated effort of professional education, advocacy, and member services in order to ensure the availability of quality osteopathic health care to the people of this State.

This year MMA and MOA's legislative committees have joined together to advocate from one voice. And our Committee has determined that it is important to testify in support of LD 2157 proposed by Representative Moonen for a number of reasons.

First, limiting access to tobacco is important for public health. Tobacco use, depending on its consumption, will negatively impact the user's health and those nearby.<sup>1</sup> Rather than allowing tobacco products to be accessible during a student's lunch break, there ought to be further limits in place to prevent students from accessing tobacco at a moment's notice. 7.6% of Maine's middle schoolers have used tobacco at least once in the past 30 days. Student tobacco use skyrockets to 29.6% once these students are in high school.<sup>2</sup> The use of tobacco by teens indicates that current policies are not enough and that the legislature should further restrict these products.

Second, prevention of student tobacco use is one way of preventing a lifelong addiction. Tobacco outlet density is associated with an increase in cigarette use.<sup>3</sup> Understanding the importance of addressing youth smoking, the FDA describes that almost 90% of adult daily smokers started smoking by the age of 18.

Third, Tobacco marketing was encountered "a lot" by 39% of respondents to the question of how often they saw such advertisements near convenience stores or gas stations mini-marts and other similar stores. This number reaches 74.7% if including the response: "sometimes."<sup>4</sup> Reduction of tobacco density near schools presents opportunities for students who may otherwise live in high tobacco outlet density areas to take a step back from the marketing, ease of access, and perhaps home use of tobacco.

Finally, tobacco products used to be both addictive and unappealing in taste, but now, while they remain addictive, they come in much more appealing flavors. Tobacco products sold near schools now range from menthol flavoring to blue raspberry and watermelon.

Thank you for considering the support of Maine's physician community about L.D. 2157. Youth across the country are encountering tobacco products everywhere they turn, the last place they should encounter tobacco is on their way to and from school. We urge an "ought to pass" vote on this bill. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Thank you,

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/health\\_effects/index.htm#:~:text=Smoking%20causes%20cancer%2C%20heart%20disease,immune%20system%2C%20including%20rheumatoid%20arthritis.](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/health_effects/index.htm#:~:text=Smoking%20causes%20cancer%2C%20heart%20disease,immune%20system%2C%20including%20rheumatoid%20arthritis.)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/sites/default/files/MIYHSDashboardHTML2020/atlas.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0091743516302353?via%3Dihub.>

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/sites/default/files/2023\\_Reports/Detailed\\_Reports/HS/MIYHS2023\\_Detailed\\_Reports\\_HS\\_State/Maine%20High%20School%20Detailed%20Tables.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/sites/default/files/2023_Reports/Detailed_Reports/HS/MIYHS2023_Detailed_Reports_HS_State/Maine%20High%20School%20Detailed%20Tables.pdf)