



MAINE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION SINCE 1936

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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition to,

LD 2157, *An Act to Prohibit Tobacco Sales Near Schools*

February 1, 2024

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Amanda Campbell, and I am submitting testimony in opposition to LD 2157 on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association (MMA), and the 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC), who were elected by their colleagues and peers to determine MMA's position on bills of municipal interest.

While municipal leaders can all agree that tobacco and tobacco products must be kept from the hands of our children, the scope of LD 2157 is too broad and may unintentionally cause more harm to communities than it will do good for our children. The retail landscape of Maine is varied and most all communities can claim at least one general store, centrally located to local services, including schools, that boasts an inventory of all things considered necessary, including tobacco. Some of these establishments have been in existence for generations and rely on the notion of "one stop convenience shopping." Local leaders feel that it is unnecessarily harsh to penalize successful businesses, who happen to sell tobacco products, by refusing to renew a retail tobacco license simply because their location is within 1000 feet of a school. Despite science that can prove the dangers of tobacco, it remains a legal and saleable item in the State of Maine. Recent months have shown initiatives to ban or regulate specific tobacco products at the local level, resulting in contentious public meetings and controversial solutions. This bill would not only increase contention and controversy to a statewide level, but it would also do so at the expense of those simply trying to do business.

Local leaders encourage a more proactive approach, within existing retail license enforcement parameters. Enforcement of current age identification laws, at the point of purchase, can ensure that our children do not obtain tobacco products from a retail establishment while also protecting the integrity of our local businesses.

For all these reasons, the LPC encourages the committee to vote Ought Not to Pass.

If you have any questions regarding MMA's position on this bill, or other bills with municipal impact, please contact me at acampbell@memun.org