

Testimony of Janet Miles, Volunteer American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

LD 210 “An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026, and June 30, 2027.

Monday February 3, 2025

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and honorable members of the Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Senator Grohoski, Representative Cloutier and members of the Committee on Taxation. My name is Janet Miles and I am here to testify in support of the \$1.00 increase on the tobacco tax in Maine.

Increasing taxes on tobacco products is a win-win proposition: significantly increasing tobacco product taxes results in fewer people starting to smoke and helps those who currently smoke to quit – including our young people and veterans. It would also help combat the tobacco industry’s continued targeting of individuals.

Cigarette smoke and secondhand smoke contribute to 1 out of 5 deaths in the United States, including 30% of all cancer deaths and 81% of lung cancer deaths. Therefore, reducing nicotine use is one of our top priorities. ACS CAN supports a comprehensive approach to tobacco products to generate revenue, protect kids and save lives.

Tobacco is an addictive and deadly product and smoking harms nearly every organ in the body and remains the nation’s number one cause of preventative deaths. I started smoking in 1973 when I joined the Air Force. I was in Texas in July and August. The phrase “Smoke them if you’ve got them, if you don’t keep on working” was the impetus for me starting.... I wanted to get out of the sun. I smoked until 1984, when the doctor’s told my father that he had to quit smoking. I quit with the idea of helping him. It didn’t. He died from heart failure with cigarette smoking being a major contributor. Forty years later and I still want to smoke.

A higher tobacco tax is unequivocally one of the most effective ways to reduce the burden of tobacco use, save the lives of many and help people quit smoking across the board. Therefore, we urge you to support the tobacco tax.

Thank you all for your attention and the consideration given to this very important issue.