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Testimony of Rep. Lori K. Gramlich presenting

LD 1519, An Act to Create a Stewardship Program for Electronic Smoking Devices and Related Products

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Good afternoon, Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and honorable members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, I am Lori Gramlich. I have the honor and privilege of representing House District 131, the lovely seaside community of Old Orchard Beach, and of serving as Assistant House Majority Leader. Thank you for the opportunity to return to my former committee today to present ***LD 1519, An Act to Create a Stewardship Program for Electronic Smoking Devices and Related Products***.

We are living in a time where our waste streams are rapidly evolving. Electronic smoking devices, often marketed as safer alternatives to traditional tobacco products, pose a growing and complex environmental threat. These devices contain lithium-ion batteries, heavy metals, plastics, and hazardous e-liquids—materials that, if improperly discarded, can cause fires in waste facilities, leach harmful chemicals into our soil and waterways, and endanger public health.

This bill is grounded in the principle of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)—a proven, common-sense approach that ensures the manufacturers of these devices bear the responsibility for the full lifecycle of their products, including safe end-of-life management. As members of this committee are very aware, this is not a new concept in Maine. We have led the nation with successful EPR programs for paint, mercury thermostats, batteries and, most recently, packaging. This bill continues that proud legacy.

What this bill does is simple, yet impactful: It requires producers—either individually, in partnerships or through a stewardship organization—to develop and implement a program for the safe collection, transportation, and recycling or disposal of unwanted electronic smoking devices.

Importantly, this program will protect public health, worker safety, and Maine's environment—without placing the burden on taxpayers or municipalities. The cost and responsibility will lie where it should: with those profiting from the sale of these products.

We have seen these devices littering our sidewalks, schoolyards and, in communities like mine, even our beaches. We've heard from solid waste professionals about fires caused by discarded vape pens. We know that our young people are using these devices at alarming rates, and the waste associated with them presents a real hazard to children and adults alike. Too often, they end up in the trash—or worse, in nature.

In developing this bill, I consulted with Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Melanie Loyzim and her team. As always, their insight was incredibly helpful, and based on those conversations, I believe the bill before you today is the right path forward. As members of the committee may already be aware, the Department highlighted the need for a solution around electronic smoking device waste in its 2025 annual report on product stewardship, which said: "The Department is proposing the consideration of electronic vape pens and cartridges ('vape pens') as potential candidate products for a product stewardship program. Vape pens have grown in popularity with little regulatory oversight regarding their disposal."

LD 1519 is a smart, balanced and proactive solution to a very real and growing problem. I urge this committee to join me in supporting this bill and ensuring that Maine remains a national leader in environmental stewardship and producer responsibility.

I understand that you may hear industry concerns today about e-smoking products that are imported from manufacturers in other countries and how to deal with that waste. I am happy to work with the committee to review those concerns as necessary to ensure this program is effective and remains true to the goals I have outlined today.

Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions.