



Solutions for a  
Toxic-Free Tomorrow

Testimony of Sarah Woodbury, Vice President of Policy and Advocacy, Defend Our Health  
In Support of LD 1519 "An Act to Create a Stewardship Program for Electronic Smoking Devices  
and Related Products" before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
April 23, 2025

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera and members of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Sarah Woodbury. I am the Vice President of Policy and Advocacy for Defend Our Health. Defend Our Health works to make sure everyone has equal access to safe food, safe drinking water, healthy homes and toxic-free, climate-friendly products. I am here to testify in support of LD 1519 "An Act to Create a Stewardship Program for Electronic Smoking Devices and Related Products."

Electronic smoking device waste has the potential to be a more serious environmental threat than cigarette butts. They introduce plastic, nicotine salts, heavy metals, lead, mercury, and flammable lithium-ion batteries into waterways, soil, and to wildlife. These toxic chemicals can harm our environment and the health of our children. Lead is a potent neurotoxin that robs children of their potential by irreversibly damaging their brain and lowering their IQ. It is widely accepted by health scientists as well as Federal agencies, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention<sup>1</sup> as well as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency<sup>2</sup> that there is no identifiable safe level of lead. They contain VOCs or Volatile Organic Compounds. According to the EPA these are "typically industrial solvents, such as trichloroethylene; fuel oxygenates, such as methyl tert-butyl ether (MTBE); or by-products produced by chlorination in water treatment, such as chloroform." The most common VOCs in flavored tobacco are benzene, which is classified as a human carcinogen and can cause eye and throat irritation and may cause kidney damage if exposed to enough over the years. Toluene can impact the nervous system. It can also cause hearing and color vision loss. Additionally, unlike cigarette butts, electronic smoking device waste doesn't biodegrade even under severe conditions. The plastic shells on many of them aren't recyclable and add to our plastic waste crisis. If left on the street they eventually break down into microplastics and chemicals that flow into the storm drains to pollute our waterways and wildlife.

Because of the plastics, toxics and the lithium batteries in these devices, they are very hard to dispose of in Maine. You shouldn't just throw these devices away because the lithium batteries make them flammable. In a Bangor Daily News article from October of 2024, Eco Maine reported that they had at least 12 fires in their facility in a one-year period due to lithium batteries in electronic smoking devices<sup>3</sup>. We need a system to safely dispose of these toxic devices. LD 1519 would do just that. It would put the onus on the disposal for these devices where it belongs, squarely with the

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<sup>1</sup> "No safe blood lead level in children has been identified. Even low levels of lead in blood have been shown to affect IQ, the ability to pay attention, and academic achievement." <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/default.htm>

<sup>2</sup> "No safe level of lead exposure has been identified." 84 FR 61724 (2019).

<sup>3</sup> Valigra, L. (2024, October 15). *These devices are hazardous waste, but there's nowhere to safely throw them out in Maine*. Bangor Daily News. <https://www.bangordailynews.com/2024/10/14/mainefocus/mainefocus-environment/hazardous-waste-devices-no-safe-disposal-maine-joam40zk0w/>



manufacturer. Neither the state nor local municipalities should have to pay for the very real costs of setting up a program to deal with these devices. Producers would have to pay for the collection, transport, recycling, and any enforcement and administrative costs, taking the burden away from the Maine taxpayer.

This is not an issue we can just kick down the road. Because of the unfortunate popularity of these devices, we need a program that can help manage the toxic and dangerous biproducts of electronic smoking devices. LD 1519 will help accomplish this. We urge the committee to vote "ought to pass" on LD 1519.