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Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 1938, An Act Regarding the Regulation of Tobacco

Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services May 13, 2025

Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and Esteemed Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Madeleine DesFosses, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. We are in support of LD 1938, An Act Regarding the Regulation of Tobacco.

The Maine AAP is a professional organization of 300 pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists dedicated to protecting the health of Maine children and adolescents. Many of our members care for youth with often serious health conditions related to tobacco use. Most have witnessed and provided treatment for youth impacted by the harmful effects of tobacco and nicotine, and the accompanying health consequences of an addiction. Closing loopholes to prevent youth initiation to smoking and vaping tobacco products, as well as exposure to harmful secondhand and thirdhand smoke, is necessary in ensuring healthy futures for Maine children and families.

Allowing smoking in hotel and motel rooms that are open to the public unnecessarily exposes adults and children to secondhand and thirdhand smoke, which can have serious health impacts. Secondhand smoke can be especially dangerous to children whose bodies are still developing, and may potentially trigger asthma symptoms, causing wheezing, coughing and shortness of breath. Exposure to secondhand smoke may also slow lung growth and increase the risk of sudden infant death syndrome, acute respiratory infections, and other well documented conditions.

Thirdhand smoke refers to the residue left behind from smoking tobacco products, which often sticks to furniture, walls, carpeting, clothing, toys and other surfaces. This residue contains over 250 chemicals that can react with other contaminants in the environment to create new chemicals, called nitrosamines. Infants and children may be exposed simply from breathing in toxic chemicals or touching surfaces and then putting their hands in their mouths when crawling on the floor or playing with toys. There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke, including thirdhand smoke or residue. Prohibiting smoking in hotel and motel rooms is a straightforward and effective step we can take to reduce exposure to secondhand and thirdhand smoke.

LD 1938 also seeks to address the issue of cigarette vending machines, which allow for youth to access nicotine products at any age. While cigarette vending machines are rare in Maine, this legislation takes an important step by codifying the closure of this loophole in law, ensuring that youth will not be able to access highly addictive and harmful tobacco products in the same convenient way they purchase snacks and drinks.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1938. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Madeleine DesFosses

Advocacy and Public Health Manager, Maine AAP