

May 7, 2021

Testimony of Chris Beaulier, Director of Retail Operations, Cigaret Shopper, Brewer, Maine, in Opposition to LD 1550-Flavored Tobacco Product Ban

To: Committee on Health and Human Services, Maine State Legislature

Chairman Claxton, Chairwoman Meyer, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Chris Beaulier and I am the Director of Retail Operations for Cigaret Shopper. We operate 22 "tobacco-only" stores in Maine and have some 100 hardworking employees.

As virtually all of our revenue is from tobacco products, and more than 25% of our sales are from flavored tobacco products, the flavor ban in LD 1550 would be particularly damaging to our stores, removing a significant number of the tobacco products that we sell from store shelves.

Protecting youth from access to tobacco products is a goal shared by everyone, including retailers. We train our employees to prevent sales to underage individuals and we do not allow anyone under 21 to enter our stores.

In fact, over the past 10 years, our stores have been inspected by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to determine compliance 238 times and we have a 99% passing rate on not selling to underage persons.

This means that our stores are not the problem when it comes to youth having access to tobacco products.

LD 1550 will not do anything to protect young people and will not have any impact on consumption of flavored tobacco products in Maine.

All it will do is drive sales from legitimate Maine retailers like our stores to one of two places: to New Hampshire, which has decided not to ban flavored products, or to illegal, unlicensed sellers of products who will bring flavored tobacco products into Maine and sell them to whomever has the cash to buy them.

All you are going to accomplish is to take these products away from legitimate Maine stores like Cigaret Shopper, and give it to New Hampshire retailers or to criminals. That does not sound like a policy that is in the best interests of Maine

and it certainly is not in the interest of our business or our employees, whose jobs would be in danger if this bill passes.

If we lose more than 25% of our businesses, then (here say the first names of 10 of your employees) and some 90 others could face being laid off. Please do not put us in the position of having to terminate employees when all they have done is work hard and prevented tobacco sales to kids.

Please support Maine businesses and youth, and oppose LD 1550.

I am happy to answer any questions you might have.