

**May 7, 2021**

Dear Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health & Human Services,

I am writing as a public health professional in support of LD 1550, “An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products” Tobacco addiction is a pediatric epidemic, and Maine has a serious problem. According to the [2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey](#), there was a near doubling in youth e-cigarette use since 2017 (28.7% vs. 15.3%), with some of the greatest increases seen in Piscataquis (26.6% vs. 6.7%) and Oxford (30.9% vs. 12.3%) counties.

The tobacco industry is laser-focused on youth and young adults, even calling them their “replacement smokers”. Tobacco companies have developed an array of more than 15,000 candy- and fruit-flavored products in colorful packaging to attract youth and mask the harsh taste of tobacco. If youth don’t start using tobacco before the age of 21, they are unlikely to ever do so. That means we need to act today.

The industry has also targeted people who are homeless, have behavioral and mental health disorders, LGBTQ+, and Black and Brown communities. They target them through lower prices, increased retail density, social connection, and product promotions.

LD 1550 is good public health, economic and social policy and ending the sale of flavored tobacco products is a matter of health equity and social justice. Please support this important legislation.

Thank you.

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