

*LD 1550: An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products*

*Testimony of Karen Davis, Houlton, Maine*

*May 7, 2021*

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Karen Davis from Houlton Maine and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1550, An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

I'm a family nurse practitioner. I just wanted to say a few words about my concerns with allowing the sale of flavored tobacco or vaping as it certainly does target our younger audience.

I also treat addiction. I work in the emergency department, I've worked in primary care, and I've focused a lot on teen health. I've seen firsthand the seriousness of both tobacco addiction as well as other addictions. I've had several people tell me as they are recovering opiate addicts, that by far, heroin was easier to get away from than tobacco and nicotine.

By selling or promoting the sale of flavored tobacco or flavored vaping, we're just targeting a younger audience and having more comorbid conditions and lung disease and serious illnesses related to that.

I've also seen pretty serious pneumonias pre COVID that we feel were related to vaping. And they were teenagers, I had to transport a 17 year old to a larger facility due to a very bad pneumonia and he was crashing fast. He had no other health conditions. His only comorbidity was that he was vaping. The pneumonia that he had was not responding to the antibiotics. And he needed a higher level of care and a specialty care. So we had to transport him from Calais to Bangor.

I currently work in the emergency department in Houlton, Maine, and we may be in rural Maine, but we still see a lot of difficulties and illnesses related to tobacco, and vaping.

Over the last 30 years, I have seen a lot of diseases, a lot of cancers, a lot of COPD, related to nicotine and tobacco. But vaping has certainly surpassed if not equals the concerns. And by having them flavored that just is going to target a very, very young audience and I don't care that you need to be 18 to buy these things, kids are going to get it. They're going to have people buy it for them. So please, lawmakers don't allow the sale of flavored tobacco or flavored vaping of any sort. Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions.