

## LD 1550 An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products

Testimony of Staci Fortunato of Augusta, Maine

May 7, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Staci Fortunato, I am a parent of two children, ages 10 and 17 here in Augusta and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1550, An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

My life has been primarily working with children, either as a childcare provider, a certified child passenger safety technician, serving as a School Board Member for the City of Augusta or volunteering at my children's schools. I love seeing children learn and thrive in different ways and become respectful citizens in their schools and communities. Seeing them grow up healthy and safe is important.

When it comes to the issue of flavored tobacco products, it's about protecting ALL kids. According to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, dated December 29, 2020 by Laura Bach\*\* the following key points are made;

- \* 81% of youth who have ever used tobacco products initiated with a flavored product.
- \* 72.3% of youth tobacco users have used a flavored tobacco product in the past month.
- \* At least two-thirds of youth tobacco users report using tobacco products "because they come in flavors I like."
- \* About half of all high school smokers use menthol cigarettes.

The message is clear, flavored tobacco products are designed for and are dangerous to children. They can also be the very beginning of a lifelong addiction. The health and wellness of the children here in our State is at stake.

Five states—California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island—have enacted laws or rules to prohibit the sale of flavored e-cigarettes, and both California and Massachusetts prohibit the sale of menthol cigarettes. Please vote for Maine to join these states and end the sale of flavored tobacco products to keep all kids safe and healthy. Please vote "YES" on LD 1550.

Thank you,

Staci Fortunato

\*\*<https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0399.pdf>