



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

### Testimony in Support

May 7, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Lisa Harvey-McPherson RN, I am here today providing testimony on behalf of Northern Light Health and our member organizations to speak in support of this bill. Northern Light Health member organizations include 10 hospitals located in southern, central, eastern and northern Maine, 8 nursing facilities, air and ground ambulance, behavioral health, addiction treatment, pharmacy, primary and specialty care practices and a state-wide home care and hospice program. Ninety three percent of Maine's population lives in the Northern Light Health service area. Northern Light Health is also proud to be one of Maine's largest employers with over 12,000 employees statewide.

Every day Northern Light Health clinicians and member organizations work to improve the health of the people of Maine. All too often we must focus on the long-term negative health effects of tobacco and tobacco related products consumed since youth by many of our patients. It is estimated that 27,000 children under 18 who are alive in Maine today will die prematurely from smoking.

Children are especially vulnerable to flavored tobacco products. More than half of all current high school smokers use menthol cigarettes. Our children are also challenged by the lure of flavored product as four out of five teenagers who have ever used tobacco started with a flavored product. By ending the sale of flavored tobacco products – like menthol, mint and candy flavors such as “Yummy Gummy and Cotton Candy” – we will protect generations of Maine kids from the harmful impacts of tobacco use and nicotine addiction.

Northern Light Health is in full support of the Maine Tobacco Prevention and Control Advisory Council's recommendation to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Maine. This action will reduce tobacco-related health disparities and make it less likely that Maine children will try their first tobacco product. The bill before you today will allow us to achieve this goal and we ask that you support this important legislation.

Thank you.

Northern Light Health  
Government Relations  
43 Whiting Hill Road  
Brewer, Maine 04412

**Office** 207-861-3282  
**Fax** 207-872-2030

#### Northern Light Health

Acadia Hospital  
A.R. Gould Hospital  
Beacon Health  
Blue Hill Hospital  
C.A. Dean Hospital  
Eastern Maine Medical Center  
Home Care & Hospice  
Inland Hospital  
Maine Coast Hospital  
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