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As a member of the Lewiston Public Health Committee, I applaud LD 1550 and its intent to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products. Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products will help reduce the number of people who die from tobacco use (Maine has extremely high rates of lung cancer), reduce the number of our youth who become addicted to tobacco products and help reverse the number of youth who use e-cigarettes.

A study from the Journal of the American Medical Association indicates that most youth who have used tobacco started with a flavored product. Many youth don't even realize that e-cigarettes contain nicotine. And since a single vaping pod can contain as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes, it is too easy for our youth to become addicted to nicotine.

Menthol cigarettes disguise the flavor of tobacco and make it more palatable for beginners. The use of menthol cigarettes is a direct result of years of targeted marketing by the tobacco industry to youth and to vulnerable communities. Because of this, menthol cigarettes also disproportionately affect communities of color (85% of black smokers smoke menthol cigarettes compared to 29% of white smokers; smoking kills 45,000 black American annually and lung cancer kills black Americans more than any other cancer.)

In Lewiston, we have been working on preventing and reducing youth vaping through community collaborations. Ending the sale of flavored tobacco can save the lives of adults and youth in our state. I urge you to support this bill.