

Good morning Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Ed Miller. I am a resident of Hallowell and am a retired public health professional with more than 40 years of experience and involvement in tobacco policy in Maine. I worked for 13 years at Maine CDC as the Health Promotion and Education Division Director followed by 20 years as CEO of the American Lung Association in Maine and 10 years as the Senior VP for Public Policy for the American Lung Association of the Northeast. I am here today as the Chair of the Maine CDC Tobacco Prevention and Control Advisory Council to speak **in favor** of LD 1550, An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

The Advisory Council was established in statute in the late 1990s to provide advice to the Maine CDC's tobacco prevention and control program and to ensure coordination with other public and private organizations. (Title 22 Chapter 102 Section 272 Sub-section 2) In addition, it is to report annually to the Governor and the Legislature with recommendations or proposed legislation to further the purposes of the program. While the Council was dormant for a number of years, this administration has reestablished it. It is my pleasure to chair this group of experienced public health professionals.

We recently provided you with a copy of our 2020 Annual Report. Support of LD 1550 is consistent with two of our six policy recommendations: to end the sale of flavored tobacco products in Maine and to create more equitable health outcomes by addressing communities disproportionately impacted by tobacco use and tobacco industry marketing.

I also want to share a little reality check. In my decades of experience in tobacco policy I have heard countless doomsday predictions from the tobacco industry and their surrogates. When the Legislature last raised the tobacco tax over 15 years ago, they predicted mass smuggling and armed gangs would threaten law and order. Obviously, that didn't happen yet we hear it over and over again. Some of their more dire warnings were made about the very smoke free laws we wouldn't consider overturning today. Their claims when these proposals were being debated seem ridiculous today, but here are a few. If we banned indoor smoking, they claimed that following would occur: there would be an end to public participation in town meetings; juries would be unable to deliberate, workplace productivity would tumble; grocery stores and the malls would lose customers; restaurants and bars would go out of business and tourists would find other places to vacation.

This industry and its allies focus their creativity on addicting people to nicotine then maintaining that addiction. Flavors are only one of their strategies. As the public became more concerned about the health effects of smoking, they invented "light" cigarettes to give smokers a false sense of security, even though the menthol in "light" made them more dangerous. When youth smoking rates began to drop dramatically in the early 1980s, they recreated Joe Camel as their cartoon mascot. As Maine and other states were banning smoking in bars and restaurants, they rolled out a product called NicoWater, a nicotine infused beverage so

customers didn't need to go outside to smoke. Fortunately, Maine lawmakers saw through this tactic and passed legislation to ban the product.

I urge you to not be fooled by their arguments and to pass LD 1550, a common sense and likely game-changing response to the increasing epidemic of nicotine addiction among our youth.

Thank you.

Edward Miller

128 Water St

Hallowell ME 04347

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