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May 6, 2021

Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

Over the years, I've seen the state of Maine grow more hostile to business, but I never thought I'd see the day when my state government would try to shutter my doors. The Maine State Legislature's proposal to ban the sale of all flavored tobacco products threatens to do just that.

Not only is this proposal bad policy, it just won't work. A full ban will drive customers to purchase products from illegal sellers or across state lines. For years, Maine has been a business-friendly state, and many North Easterners have come here to purchase tobacco products. Implementing this policy would cut off an outsized source of tax revenue, as well as customers for our small businesses.

I am sympathetic to this proposal's goal to reduce youth tobacco usage, but it will not accomplish that goal. As it stands, retailers are the first line of defense at keeping tobacco products out of minors' hands. We are well-trained and dedicated to implementing strict ID checks. By removing this barrier to access, you are only making these products more accessible to young people.

This regulation is an assault on essential services. Policies that reduce revenue or add additional burdens on retailers are tone-deaf and inconsistent with the need to support retailers during this unprecedented time. Officials who don't support retailers are working against the best interests of the community.

I am a responsible retailer, and I do my part to keep tobacco out of the hands of Maine's youth. Please do not punish me by limiting access to my store's most profitable good.

I urge you to stand with Maine's business owners and vote NO on LD 1550.

Sophia Nolin