

Anand Patel
scarborough

Dear Legislator,

As I wrote this letter, I struggled to find the exact words to convey my frustration at your proposal to ban flavored tobacco products here in Maine.

As a legislator, it is your job to do due diligence when it comes to implementing legislation. If you've spent any time researching Massachusetts' recent restrictions on tobacco sales, you would know this proposal is a bad idea for Maine.

Massachusetts is losing \$10 million a month in tobacco tax stamp revenue after banning the sale of flavored nicotine products. What's worse, that money is going directly into the pockets of Massachusetts' neighbors. New Hampshire and Rhode Island have reaped 80 percent of Massachusetts' lost revenue from tobacco sales.

I'd like to remind you that out-of-state consumers have generated increased tax revenue for Maine over the years. When customers come to our state to purchase tobacco, they also shop at other retail stores. Like Massachusetts, we will lose an extraordinary amount of business to neighboring states if you implement this mandate.

You seemed to have forgotten that during the first half of this fiscal year, Maine took in nearly \$80 million in tax revenue from tobacco sales. This would put the state on pace to bring in roughly 17 percent more than the previous fiscal year. But if we took the advice of anti-tobacco objectors—as Massachusetts has—those gains could go up in smoke.

This issue is also personal to me and the people who count on my business to stay open. Massachusetts' retailers have seen a 25 percent decline in cigarette sales since the ban. That level of reduction would have a devastating impact on my business, which also sells groceries and other products that the community relies on. Last year, the government recognized the sacrifice my employees make by coming to work during this public health crisis by designating us an essential business. Now that you all are considering this proposal, I question whether you truly value our labor.

Please learn from Massachusetts' mistake and do not doom Maine and its small businesses to the same fate. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Anand Patel

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