

Phillip Potenziano  
Brunswick

LD 1550: An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products  
Dr. Phillip J. Potenziano, Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools Brunswick, Maine

May 7, 2021

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Dr. Phil Potenziano, Superintendent of Schools in Brunswick, Maine, and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1550, An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

I provide testimony as a Superintendent, Parent, and Resident of this Great State. Maine's future depends on "healthy kids" -

Brunswick School Department cares about our students - their overall wellness and good health are essential to their readiness for school to their success.

"Maine depends on all of our children to be healthy," and I've seen first hand the harmful effects that tobacco-flavored products have impacted my students - there is no denying that - it happens in our schools - our hallways, our classrooms, locker rooms, school-yards.

I'm growing increasingly concerned that tobacco use among Maine youth has been skyrocketing - to 1 out of 3 Maine kids now using some form of tobacco product, including cigarettes, cigars, e-cigarettes, and chewing tobacco.

Ponder that for a moment 1 out of 3 Maine children are going to be addicted because Tobacco companies have developed an array of menthol, candy, and dessert-flavored products in colorful packaging to attract new users and addict them to tobacco.

The tobacco industry knows that 95 % of adult smokers start by age 21, so these flavored products aren't for adults.

When I have spoken to students about tobacco addiction, they report it tasted good - it makes me feel good - the fact is Flavors hook our students. Students are uniquely susceptible to nicotine addiction because their brains are still developing.

I welcome any of you on this committee to come to visit my schools - come and speak to my administrators, nurses, counselors, teachers, and coaches. They will all have stories to tell about the harmful effects of Flavored Tobacco and how it hooks our students.

If you take away one thing from me today - one small thing - it is that Tobacco Flavored Products - are by far impacting our most vulnerable students - students who our society has repeatedly marginalized and students I strive to ensure they have a fighting chance to succeed - help me take away one impediment to their success.

Please vote 'yes' on LD 1550.

Thank you for your time, and I'd be glad to answer any questions you may have.