

LD 1550: An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products

Testimony of Tia Saucier, Fort Kent Community High School

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Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services: my name is Tia Saucier, I live in Fort Kent, and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1550, An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products. I can not even count on two hands how many people around me are now addicted to nicotine due to flavored tobacco products. There are that many. A vast majority of them are around my age; 15 to 16 and even younger. More than 1 in 4 Maine high school students now uses e-cigarettes, a rate that has nearly doubled in the past 2 years¹. It always started off as other people that I did not know that well and were much older than me, using these products. But shortly after, I started going to certain social gatherings where a lot of people my age were now a part of this. I was stunned. People would pass around various types of e-cigarettes containing different pod flavors saying “try this new flavor”, “it tastes like cotton candy”, etc.

These people my age then began buying their own from people that were illegally selling them to minors. Now they had their own and were able to use these e-cigarettes whenever they wanted. This resulted in them becoming hooked. If a group of friends and I would be out somewhere and they realized that their e-cigarette had been left at home, we would be forced to turn around and go get it, or listen to the person complain the whole time that they needed their nicotine. They would even ask around at social gatherings to see if anyone had an e-cigarette that

¹ Maine Department of Health & Human Services & Maine Department of Education, “Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey”, 2019.
https://data.mainepublichealth.gov/miyhs/files/2019_Reports/Detailed_Reports/HS/MIYHS2019_Detailed_Reports_HS_State/Maine_High_School_Detailed_Tables.pdf.

they could use for a while simply because they needed their fix. They were craving nicotine. It was not all fun and games anymore, though they still saw and continue to see no problem with it. They always tell me “Oh my god, stop being so stressed out. I’m fine”, “This isn’t going to do anything to me”, “It’s literally just flavored water.” While almost all e-cigarettes contain nicotine,² more than half of Maine youth who use e-cigarettes say they think it’s just harmless flavoring.³ But as we all know, it is not “just flavored water”. These things are actually doing damage to the body. There is growing evidence that e-cigarettes can harm lung health.⁴ And now, the U.S. Surgeon General warns that nicotine exposure during adolescence and young adulthood can cause addiction and long-term harm to brain development, stating, “No matter how it's delivered, nicotine is harmful for youth and young adults.”⁵

There are many ways that vaping and other forms of flavored tobacco products can disrupt the lives of people and those around them, but passing the LD 1550 bill to ban said products would be a huge step towards the effort to save the lives of countless people, including the main target of these products; teens.

² Romberg AR, et al, “Patterns of nicotine concentrations in electronic cigarettes sold in the United States, 2013-2018”, Drug and Alcohol Dependence, Volume 203, Pages 1-7, October 2019.

³ Maine Department of Health & Human Services & Maine Department of Education, “Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey”, 2019.
https://data.mainepublichealth.gov/miyhs/files/2019_Reports/Detailed_Reports/HS/MIYHS2019_Detailed_Reports_HS_State/Maine_High_School_Detailed_Tables.pdf.

⁴ Xie, W., Kathuria, H., Galiatsatos, P., Blaha, M. J., Hamburg, N. M., Robertson, R. M., ... & Stokes, A. C. (2020). Association of Electronic Cigarette Use With Incident Respiratory Conditions Among US Adults From 2013 to 2018. JAMA network open, 3(11), e2020816-e2020816.

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with the Office of the U.S Surgeon General and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health, 2020. <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/> Accessed December 11, 2020.