

An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products

To whom it may concern,

My name is Dale Stevens, and I stand firmly against LD 1550. It feels not long ago that I stood in front of most of you and gave my personal testimony on why a flavor ban would effectively kill numerous small businesses in Maine as well as break the hearts of millions of tobacco and non-tobacco users in Maine. I come to you today as a Maine citizen, a friend, an uncle, a son, a non-combustible tobacco user, but most importantly—a concerned human being.

Psychologically we are wired to enjoy a wide variety of flavors, certainly there is no argument opposing that. The issue with this bill stems from the ideology that removing flavors from authorized tobacco retailers will somehow decrease current or future tobacco usage. I began smoking at the age of seventeen using traditional, fowl-tasting cigarettes, simply due to peer pressure. I was well versed in the repercussions and risks yet made the conscious decision to become an avid tobacco user. Over a decade later I walked into my first vape shop where I purchased a bottle of flavored e-liquid and I have not picked up a single cigarette since. It was initially the cleaner and healthier alternative that attracted me to vaping, but it was the flavors that effectively kept me on the right path.

A blanket flavor ban is likely to disable small, already wounded tobacco and alternative tobacco retailers, promote illicit tobacco trafficking, and upset tens of thousands tobacco users. I truly believe that LD 1550 is free of ill intention and comes from a good place of heart, however it is simply overstepping and negligent regarding the negative implications it will promote. As we stand currently, in the state of Maine, we have a 43% wholesale tax on tobacco products, an upcoming bill promoting another tobacco tax increase and of course LD 1550. Please do not be complicit in being the nail in the coffin for thousands of innocent lives using flavored tobacco to stay away from combustible cigarettes.

I implore each one of you to examine this situation from a different perspective and situation. Imagine a bill in which was submitted to effectively ban all flavored coffees in an effort to curb underage excessive sugar and caffeine consumption (as we know both are contributing factors to heart disease). Would you look at the situation the same? Would your opinion change?

I appreciate your time and attention and hope you make the right decision for the people.

Best,

Dale Stevens