

My name is Haley Taranko, I am a full time Public Administration student at UMA and full-time employee at a vape and glass gallery in Hallowell. I would like to present this testimony against the proposed bill.

Vaping has seen increased popularity over the years and often people are quick to dismiss that popularity, as being due to the fruity flavors available to consumers. The benefits enjoyed by long time smokers after converting to vaping are not discussed often enough. Everyday at my job I see lifelong smokers who thought they would never stop smoking cigarettes, because they were far too dependent on nicotine. While they are still feeding this dependency by vaping, they are breaking down the social barriers that burden smokers. Because vaping does not involve smoke or tar, those who convert to vaping do not deal with the stigma of yellowing teeth, or the yellowing windows and walls of indoor places they indulge in. They do not have to walk around conscious that they smell of cigarettes, knowing how offensive that smell can be to nonsmokers. Being able to switch to vaping as an alternative, and not having to exhibit so many telltale signs of being a smoker, allows smokers to feel more accepted by family and society, and in many cases of addiction the first step to quitting is having an accepting environment to express your feelings in, and supportive people to fall back on. Vaping can create that for smokers.

Another common myth about vaping is that it appeals mostly to younger people, and therefore is more likely to find its way into the hands of underaged persons. In reality, their appeal remains relatively the same. A study by the advocacy group tobacco free kids found that 24% of 12 graders had tried a cigarette at least once in their lifetime. Another study conducted by Brookings Research institution found that 24% of seventeen-year-olds, essentially the same age group of the first study, report having tried an e-cigarette at least once (Quintero). The temptation to try illicit substances at a young age is fundamental and thrilling and will not be solved by limiting the flavors those substances come in.

Normalizing vaping over smoking cigarettes could actually lead to a reduction in nicotine addiction. According to Purdue University, the first child of smoking parents is 15x more likely to smoke than a child of nonsmoking parents. Everyone retains scents and sounds from their childhood that make them feel nostalgic in later life, and for many children that childhood smell is cigarettes. When smoked inside, cigarettes permeate walls and can easily spread their smell through an entire household, and studies show it lingers in the air for up to 20 minutes in a ventilated room after last exhaled. On the other hand, The Journal of Exposure Science & Environmental Epidemiology studied the particles in the air at a 2017 vaping convention in Maryland and found that vapor from e cigarettes only lingers in a ventilated room for an average of 11 seconds, and does not change the quality of air in an enclosed space after smoked. Vaping is a lot harder for children to notice, and a lot less harmful to them. Also vaping does not have a distinguishable smell for children to pick up on, because there are so many flavor options. Not introducing children to cigarettes at a young age means the smell and smoke will not have a chance to subconsciously predispose them to a nicotine addiction. Encouraging parents to vape as an alternative to smoking could greatly reduce nicotine dependency for the next generation.

I do not want anyone to get the impression that I am arguing that vaping is healthy, it is objectively not. I am merely pointing out the unseen benefits of vaping that do not get public attention, and I would like to point out that I would also stand in opposition of a ban on fast food, alcohol, or any other unhealthy things that grown adults in a free country should have access to, I see no difference between those indulgences, and vaping. Imagine a legislation proposing that soda only come in one plain flavor, to discourage childhood obesity, it would not be perceived as an effective method by the public.

In addition, Maine benefits greatly from the vaping industry. Every wholesale purchase of e-cigarettes that comes to Maine is taxed at 43%, and at our store we turnover vape inventory at least once a week, we literally can not get them back on our shelves fast enough to meet demand, I can only assume from my experience that many other shops selling e-cigarettes experience a similar demand, which must be creating a wealth of tax revenue for our state. I cannot wrap my head around the state having a good reason to cut this source of revenue. Especially when we are so close to the state of New Hampshire, which has a plethora of vape stores and charges not even sales tax. The state would not be preventing people from buying flavored vapes with this bill, they would only lose their gain from the market, while citizens flock to the next state over. I have witnessed firsthand that people who vape are not easily deterred from buying them. When the sales tax of wholesale vape products increased earlier this year, our store, in turn, had to raise our prices by 50%. I have not had a single customer unwilling to pay the extra \$10, it does not faze them, a drive across the border will not intimidate a frequent consumer.

The last point I would like to make is that in Maine we have an epidemic of young people who take advantage of a great education, at the reduced price of in state tuition, only to leave this state and benefit another one with their education and professional abilities. I understand the need to implement laws that seem to benefit public to combat this phenomenon, but this law is a step in the wrong direction, and I urge you to explore the con side of this case.

Sources

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