

Daniel Tremble  
Bangor

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and Honorable Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

My name is Daniel Tremble, I live in Bangor, Maine and I am here today to testify in favor of LD 1550, An Act To End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

The City of Bangor's Health Promotion Manager Jamie Comstock is here today, so instead of testifying as Bangor's Mayor, I am submitting testimony as the owner and operator of the Fairmount Market. If you're ever in Bangor, come by. We were finalists in the Bangor Daily News' competition for best local pizza, and I think we make the best sandwiches in town.

We opened our doors in 1925, and have been serving the neighborhood around Fairmount and Fifth Street Parks ever since. We get all walks of life coming through our doors, and we try to have something special for everyone, including some tobacco products. While we don't sell flavored vaping products, we do sell some menthol flavored tobacco. And, of course, if we end the sale of all flavored tobacco including menthol, I might lose some revenue, but not enough to make it worthwhile to endanger our kids.

Our market is part of the community. We try to give back as much as we can. One of the things we do for the neighborhood is sponsor a local little league team. In 2019, our team won the West Side Little League Championship! I'm proud of those kids. I go to the games when I can and cheer them on. And it would break my heart if I saw one of them vaping or smoking cigarettes.

There's no way I want to sponsor a Little League team and turn around the next day and put those same kids at risk of tobacco addiction. So as I've learned more about flavored tobacco, including menthol, I can easily stand here today and say 'get these things off the market'. Luring kids into a lifetime of addiction is no business I want to be in, and I bet there are plenty of store owners around the state who feel the same way.

Flavored tobacco products are clearly targeted at getting our children hooked on tobacco. Just look at the list of flavors sold: brown sugar graham cracker, hot cocoa, nectarine and chill, orange creamsicle, and zombie. These aren't adult flavors – these are putting a bulls-eye on every kid in our communities.

So, why do they sell them in all those flavors? I now know the answer is pretty clear, 97% of adult smokers started before the age of 21. In order to strengthen their place in the market, tobacco companies need to get kids hooked to have future customers.

Let me just say again that ending the sale of menthol cigarettes is just as important as getting rid of flavored vaping products. For too long these cigarettes have been marketed to people of color and have resulted in a lifetime of addiction. I bet everyone around this room can name someone in their family who started smoking menthols and found themselves addicted. Hopefully most were fortunate to quit, but too many die early and it's all preventable. So, if we are going to end the sale of flavored tobacco, it has to include menthol since it is the largest flavor sold.

Ending the sale of all flavored tobacco and vaping products will lower the rate of youth smoking. This will lower the rate of tobacco related disease and a lifetime of addiction.

There are health experts testifying on the devastating impacts of addiction to tobacco. They definitely know more than me. But, I want to share my biggest concern: the impact of smoking on the cognitive development of our kids – on their ability to learn, do well in school, and join the workforce in our communities. My hope for the kids on my little league team, and for all children, is that they be given the opportunity to reach their full potential. Addiction to nicotine limits that opportunity and leaves too many kids behind.

We are the adults here. We have the power to protect our children from something

we know, with absolute certainty, will adversely impact their futures.

When you get ready to cast your vote on LD 1550, remember that menthol cigarettes, and mint-flavored chew, and banana cream pie vaping products are a cynical strategy to addict our children to tobacco.

It is time to end the sale of flavored tobacco products. Please support LD 1550, and put our kids development and future success first. And for those of you with kids and grandkids playing Little League, watch out for the Fairmount Market Cubs! We're looking to be state champions next year! Thank you for your time and commitment to kids' health.