

Ahsan Ashraf
Portland, ME
LD 1693

Dear Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Ahsan Ashraf, I writing to you as a resident and small business operator in Portland, ME. My business is Three D's Variety and employs 2 Maine residents. I am disappointed to hear that the Maine State Legislature is considering increasing tobacco taxes as well as a ban on menthol cigarettes, flavored dip, and flavored cigars across the state. I urge you to oppose this measure.

With only two employees available to run our store, we have been working tirelessly to keep our doors open and stocked with the essential items our customers need. This is not the right time to pass this type of legislation and now more than ever we need your help to remain open and help small businesses like ours to get back on their feet. Every day is a fight to stay open and between rising costs along every supply chain and the inability to find reliable help in the store, our hope is that the state focuses on more pressing issues like hospitalizations, supply chain, and returning people back to work.

My family has owned multiple convenience stores between Maine and New Hampshire, and I know that all the business we lose will move right to New Hampshire. I have seen the business is simply going to move over the border first hand.

This proposal is very similar to what has happened in Massachusetts. My family in Massachusetts who own small businesses like mine have been trying to sell their stores because they cannot make ends meet any longer. Unfortunately, due to the legislation passed in Mass, they cannot find anyone to buy the store. This leaves my family members in even deeper financial hardship. Passing this bill will only increase the divide between small business and big chains. Please do not put me in the difficult situation I have watched my family go through.

This bill will do irreversible harm to all small businesses like mine, and we believe that during this difficult economic time, convenience stores have been essential businesses that have been taking care of our communities. Please do not make us suffer any more.

I ask that you to vote against LD 1693, and I want to thank you for your time to speak.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Ahsan Ashraf
Three D's Variety