

Katrina Bates
Patten
LD 1693

Members of the HHS Committee,

I am writing as a Maine voter and taxpayer urging you to oppose LD 1693, Part D, which would ban the sale of vapor products in flavors other than tobacco. While many believe that such regulations will curb youth use of new nicotine products, there is no evidence to support this belief. Instead, there is real concern -- based on decades of experience with the failed and harmful drug war -- that banning flavored nicotine products will have dire, unintended consequences that amount to more harm to consumers of all ages.

Recent reports on the matter of appropriate regulation for nicotine vapor products are now available and I encourage you to review them before voting on legislation that would enact heavy restrictions on vaping.

A recent blog post by the Director of Health Improvement for Public Health England, John Newton, "8 things to know about e-cigarettes," outlines several of the misconceptions about vapor products and the benefits of promoting these products to people who smoke. Mr. Newton's post also highlights the clear absence of vaping acting as a gateway to smoking.

Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy has also recently released a report called "Vaping: Clearing the Air" in which authors Katharine Neill Harris, Ph.D. and William Martin, Ph.D. warn against enacting a flavor ban. With more than 90% of people who are switching from smoking to vaping citing flavors other than tobacco as very important to helping them move away from combustible tobacco, a flavor ban would take away a vital -- and affordable -- tool for millions of Americans who are quitting smoking. This report also discourages heavy enforcement against using, selling, or making flavored vapor products by referencing lessons we are learning from our decades long drug war.

I hope you will review this material before coming to a conclusion about how new, low-risk nicotine products should be regulated in Maine. I, along with my fellow members of Consumer Advocates for Smoke-free Alternatives Association (CASAA), thank you for considering my comments on this issue. Please keep me informed of developments in this matter. I look forward to your response on this issue and I am available for any questions you might have.

Sincerely,
Katrina Bates
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