

Anna Bettencourt
portland
LD 1693

Hello,

I'm writing you as a representative of Energy North, a local chain that owns and operates 9 retail locations in Maine that employs more than 100 Maine residents. I am disappointed to hear that Maine is considering a ban on flavored tobacco products and an doubling the excise tax on cigarettes that will, undoubtedly, have an overwhelming impact to our business.

As we speak, the FDA is using a scienced based approach to evaluate each product via the PMTA and MRTP application processes. To date, more than 6 million products have been removed from the marketplace. To pass the PMTA process, the science must demonstrate the product is "appropriate for the protection of public health." The FDA has vast resources to properly evaluate each product for the public good.

We all can agree that e-vapor products should not get into the hands of the underaged. At Energy North, we have not failed an underage sting in more than 3 years. We have invested in the best technology to scan IDs for every adult tobacco and alcohol consumer that looks to be under the age of 45. We take this issue very seriously and abide by the current stringent laws and regulations here in Maine.

Over the last 15 years, states that increased excise taxes on cigarettes by more than \$1/pack saw volumes declined by more than 21%. Cigarettes alone make up more than 36% of our in-store sales and a decline of more than 21% would force us to make difficult business decisions that could impact our staff. As a retailer, we have been under significant pressure during the pandemic as essential employees serving our community. Please do not pass a tax that would put an additional burden on our business, customers, and employees.

I urge you not to pass LD 1693 and I thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Anna Bettencourt
Energy North