

Anna Marie Buck
Raymond, ME
LD 1693

Dear Members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Anna Marie Buck, and am I writing to you as a resident and small business operator of Hilltop Mini Mart in Raymond, ME. My business employs 7 Maine residents. I am disappointed to hear that the Maine State Legislature is considering such a dramatic tax increase on cigarettes, and a ban on menthol cigarettes, flavored dip, and flavored cigars across the state. I urge you to oppose this measure.

A tax increase combined with a ban on flavored tobacco products would cause great harm to my business. Adult customers who purchase flavored tobacco products also purchase gas, food, and other items that our store depends on. The fresh food offerings in my store are so important to my business. We are proud to serve so many blue-collar, working class employees in our community that rely on our wide range of items on their way to work, during lunch, and then again on their way home for dinner. If legislation like this passes, it would greatly effect my ability to employ enough team members to satisfy the needs of my customers. The financial implication of a bill like this may cause me to reduce the number of employees in my store as well as reduce the scope of products offered in the store; of which many are supplied by local Maine businesses.

The other reason why I oppose this bill is the impact it will have on my seasonal business. In Maine, the stores on Rt. 302 greatly rely on the influx of business from tourism; both in state tourists as well as out of state visitors. The stores in this area have 125-150 days to make the money required to survive the rest of the year. By passing category flavor bans, combined with raising taxes on cigarettes will greatly reduce the amount of sales I make to these visitors. The volume that used to come into my store will drastically reduce as a majority of the volume will be purchased before entering the state. New Hampshire will be where products can be found at a great discount. In this case, no one wins. My business suffers, my employees suffer, and the state loses valuable tax revenue.

We agree we need to address underage vaping, but banning all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, makes no sense.

Maine's small business owners have struggled to keep their doors open during this prolonged economic slowdown. Not only have gas and in-store sales been impacted, but I've also had to invest in additional safety measures resulting in unforeseen costs negatively impacting my bottom line.

This broad ban on flavored tobacco products would jeopardize a significant portion of my revenue and quite frankly, could force many businesses like mine to close its doors. A ban on these products would put thousands of Maine jobs at risk.

I urge you to vote against LD 1693. Please do not move forward with such a broad ban and tax increase.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Anna Marie Buck
Hilltop Mini Mart
Raymond, ME