

Health and Human Services and Public Safety Committee,

I'm writing you as a wholesale distributor, National Convenience Distributors, that supplies hundreds of retail locations in Maine with food, sundries, and tobacco products. I am disappointed to hear that Maine is considering LD 1693, a bill that would increase the tax on cigarettes by \$2 per pack and would implement a ban on menthol cigarettes, flavored dip, and flavored cigars. I urge you to oppose this bill.

A large tax increase, like the one you have proposed, harms retailers and wholesalers alike, and creates unintended consequences like illegal smuggling. The COVID-19 pandemic has put an enormous burden on our business and, frankly, many of our customers have closed their doors. Now is not the time to put additional strain on an already ravaged business community.

I come to you with a unique perspective as my company, National Convenience Distributors, also services hundreds of locations in Massachusetts. Banning flavored tobacco products did not work in Massachusetts and it will not work in Maine. In the 18 months following the flavor ban in MA that went into effect on 6/1/20, we saw sales move from Massachusetts to NH, RI, CT, and NY. New Hampshire residents aren't smoking twice as many menthol cigarettes. Instead, the flavor ban has created an illegal black market. I have seen pictures and video from my customers with individuals selling menthol cigarettes in their parking lots.

Lastly, the FDA is using a science based approach to evaluate each product via the premarket tobacco application (PMTA) and modified risk tobacco product (MRTTP) application processes. The FDA has allocated millions of dollars of resources to properly evaluate each individual product. Please let the FDA do their regulatory job.

I urge you not to move forward with such a massive tax increase and broad ban that will undoubtedly hurt small business.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kyle Feldman

National Convenience Distributors