

Brooke LaBelle
Wells
LD 1693

Members of the HHS Committee,

I am writing as a voter and a taxpayer in Maine urging you to resist calls from well-meaning but misinformed activists to ban flavored vapor products and other safer alternatives to smoking. Specifically, I am writing in opposition to LD 1693, Part D, which would ban the sale of flavored vapor products. It should now be clear that such drastic action would cause irreparable harm to the same people it is intended to protect. Forcing legitimate specialty retailers to close will expose consumers to unnecessary risks including shopping on an unregulated underground market and even returning to smoking.

Legal, regulated businesses play a vital role in ensuring that consumers have access to well-made products and keeping adult products out of the hands of young people. If these products are pushed into an underground market where there is no oversight and no motivation to comply with regulations, purchasing and consuming nicotine will be unnecessarily more risky.

The 2019 outbreak of lung illnesses being broadly attributed to "vaping" by health officials is a direct result of overbearing drug policy that encourages products to be made and sold by an underground, unregulated industry. Pushing nicotine products--currently being made and sold by legitimate businesses--into such an environment might have similar results, including exposing all consumers to greater risk.

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 know that the vaping community are your allies in addressing concerns about youth use and we are open to working toward a positive way forward. On the same token, flavored alcohol is consumed by our youth and should be legal for adults just as flavored vaping. It seems contradictory to have one legal and not the other, especially when vaping has been proven to help discontinue nicotine use. Thank you for all your hard work and I hope you consider my position as a born and raised Mainer.

Sincerely,
Brooke LaBelle
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