

Tom Patel
Westbrook, Maine
LD 1693

Dear Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Tom Patel, I writing to you as a resident and small business operator in Westbrook, Maine. I am disappointed to hear that the Maine State Legislature is considering increasing taxes across the entire tobacco category as well as a ban on menthol cigarettes, flavored dip, and flavored cigars across the state. I urge you to oppose this measure.

If you pass this bill, you will be simply increasing the burden on Maine's lowest income earners. Did you know that just over 38% of people earning less than 15,000 per year smoke whereas only 10% of adults earning over 50,000 per year are smokers? This tax increase will unfairly target low-income earners. With the current state of our economy, and how it seems to only be getting worse, I urge you to please oppose LD 1693.

This proposal will do irreversible harm to Maine's small businesses at a time when they are most vulnerable. It would jeopardize a significant portion of my revenue and quite frankly, could force my business to close its doors. A ban on these products would put thousands of Maine jobs at risk. Menthol cigarettes account for nearly 18% of all cigarette sales in Maine. For moist smokeless tobacco, flavored products are nearly 87% of sales in our state. Now more than ever, I'm looking to you to make the right decisions to help small businesses get back on their feet. We pay taxes, create jobs, and support the local economy. This ban would not only hurt our business, but it could also have devastating effects in our community. We are an essential business and have played an important role in taking care of our community.

The tax increase combined with the ban on all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, makes no sense. It will multiply the existing illegal market in Maine, reward criminal smugglers, and cost Maine businesses, workers, and taxpayers billions of dollars.

I urge you to vote against LD 1693

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Tom Patel
Martini Lane
Westbrook, Maine