

February 4, 2022

Written Testimony: LD 1693 - An Act To Advance Health Equity, Improve the Well-being of All Maine People and Create a Health Trust

To: The members of the Health and Human Services committee

From: Phil Rossetti - Board Member of Be The Influence - A Drug Free Community Grant and Raymond, Maine citizen

Re: Testimony IN FAVOR of LD 1693

Dear Honorable Senators and Representatives,

I am writing this testimony **IN FAVOR** of LD 1693, An Act To Advance Health Equity, Improve the Well-being of All Maine People and Create a Health Trust and in particular subchapter 5 flavored tobacco products.

As a veteran school administrator I have witnessed first hand the effects flavored tobacco products have had on the youth of our community. While these products have been advertised as a healthy alternative to smoking, they often provide many times more the addictive ingredients of nicotine. Our community has had an increased use of tobacco products by our youth since 2015 when the popular JUUL device was launched. In our community, according to the Maine Youth Integrated Health Survey Teen use of tobacco increased from 10.6% of students who have used tobacco products in the last 30 days in 2015 to 22.5% in 2017. There is no coincidence that the availability of smokeless tobacco products has caused this uptick in adolescent use and flavored tobacco products support this use.

Working in the trenches with youth I have seen a noticeable difference in our students. Having confiscated hundreds of vaping devices I can count on one hand the number of devices that contained a cartridge that was not flavored. When Mango flavor was being eliminated I had students ordering them online and selling them for \$20 a pod. This increased addiction and need for more by my students has led to major disruptions to their education. Students are in my office shaking as they try to quit or wean themselves off them. I'm having conversations with families that often have no idea their child is using them and sadly we do not have the support networks in our state to give adolescents and families the support they need to break this addiction.

According to Tobacco Free kids 30.2% of Maine High school students use e-cigarettes compared to 19.6% nationally. Limiting access to flavored tobacco products would discourage many youth from ever taking their first puff. In the long run this will save lives, will lessen the impact on healthcare, put more money in the pockets of Mainers and make Maine a healthy and safe place to live. The bottom line is that flavored tobacco products have a direct impact on the health, wellness and education of the youth of our state. Please take a stand and vote **In favor** of LD 1693 ending the sale of Flavored tobacco products and supporting the overall well-being of the people of Maine.

Sincerely,

Phil Rossetti