

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer and members of Health and Human Services Committee I am Owen Casas and am submitting testimony on behalf of the Maine Vapers Association on LD 1693 An Act to Advance Health Equity, Improve the Well-being of All Maine People and Create a Health Trust. The Association represents local business owners, their employees and other Mainers who support access to vaping related products.

We appreciate the general intent of LD 1693 and thank Representative Talbot-Ross for bring it forward and further thank her for the opportunity to talk with her personally on it. On parts A, B & C of the bill we are neither for nor against the sections and simply encourage the committee to ask good questions of staff and others while considering the construction of the both the Trust for a Healthy Maine and the Office of Health Equity.

We do oppose part D as written. Part E is more difficult to weigh in on because, although we appreciate the intent of providing more resources for tobacco prevention efforts generally, we find a doubling of taxes a weighty consideration warranting a full exploration of the impacts and intent before finalizing a specific taxation rate.

There are many aspects of smoking, vaping, and tobacco consumption associated with consideration of a full flavor tobacco ban. It is difficult to determine if this bill is the most appropriate place for a flavor tobacco ban discussion, as relevant as it might seem to the creation of the proposed Trust and Health Equity Office. Between the overlap of LD 1550 and part D of LD 1693, as well as LD 1523 and its proposed creation of a Trust for Healthy, our concern is that very important aspects of the Health Equity Office and Trust for Health Maine will crowd out equally important discussions. Specifically vaping, how products are evaluated and offered, consumption rates and the impacts these products have. However this Committee wishes to manage these issues is your purview, and we would strongly encourage you to set vaping aside to be discussed in depth and at a later time/ date.

At that time, we are happy to work with the legislature on vaping related concerns and separating them out from smoking and other forms of tobacco consumption. We have been following CDC, NIH, FDA and other federal professionals' developments around vaping and feel that review of recent scientific studies, surveys, and other relevant data is very much needed before finalizing any bans related to vaping products.

I thank you for your time and consideration of this testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any question questions.

Respectfully-

Owen Casas