



Testimony of Hilary Schneider, Maine Government Relations Director
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

In Opposition to Section 12 of LD 158 “An Act To Eliminate Inactive Boards and Commissions”

February 17, 2021

My name is Hilary Schneider and I am the Maine Director of Government Relations for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). ACS CAN empowers advocates across the country to make their voices heard and influence evidence-based public policy change as well as legislative and regulatory solutions that will reduce the cancer burden. As the American Cancer Society’s nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate, ACS CAN is critical to the fight for a world without cancer.

On behalf of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) and those we represent, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to submit this testimony in opposition to section 12 of LD 158. This section proposes to eliminate the Tobacco Prevention and Control Advisory Council. It is my understanding that Representative Tuell will be proposing that this section be eliminated from the bill as this advisory council is currently active. This council was inactive for a number of years, but was re-established and has been meeting for about a year.

In January 2020, I had the honor of being appointed as a member of the Tobacco Prevention and Control Advisory Council by Senate President Jackson. Around that time, the council was fully appointed. Maine CDC staff convened the first meeting of the newly appointed council on February 3, 2020. Since then, the council has met monthly and has drafted its annual report to the Legislature.

The Tobacco Prevention and Control Advisory Council was created in 1997 as part of the originating statute that created the state’s tobacco prevention and control program, housed within the Maine CDC. The advisory council was created to provide advice to the Maine CDC in carrying out its statutory duties with regard to the tobacco control program and ensure coordination of the program with relevant nonprofit and community agencies and the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services and other relevant state agencies. The advisory council consists of 9 members, appointed by the Governor and members of legislative leadership.

Members serve for 3-year terms and may be reappointed. The Maine CDC provides staff assistance to the advisory council and the council is required to report annually on the program to the Governor and the Legislature and include any recommendations or proposed legislation to further the purposes of the program.

The advisory council currently consists of a diverse set of individuals that bring a significant number of years of experience and expertise in tobacco prevention and treatment, and public health, more generally.

Tobacco use remains the leading preventable risk factor for cancer, heart disease, lung disease (including COPD and asthma), and stroke, which account for most of the top 5 leading causes of death of Maine people. In Maine, more than one in 5 cancer cases and nearly one in three cancer deaths are related to smoking.¹ Nationally, Maine has the 6th highest rate of smoking-related cancer cases and the 11th highest rate of smoking-related cancer deaths.² Smoking costs Maine \$811 million in health care costs each year including approximately \$262 million in state Medicaid costs.³ As such, the state tobacco control program plays a vital role in reducing the toll of tobacco – both in terms of lives, livelihood and costs – in Maine. The advisory council helps ensure the program is carrying out its legal requirements effectively and provides information and reports annually to the Governor and HHS Committee. This reporting provides insights that ensure accountability of the program and identify concerning trends that may be addressed through legislation.

For these reasons, we urge you to support Representative Tuell’s proposed amendment to eliminate section 12 of LD 158. Thank you for your time, attention, and consideration of our comments. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact me via email at hilary.schneider@cancer.org or by phone at 207-373-3707.

¹ American Cancer Society analysis as documented in “State-Specific Smoking-Related Cancer Cases and Deaths, 2017,” American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, updated December 3, 2020, <https://www.fightcancer.org/sites/default/files/State-Specific%20Smoking-Attributable%20Cancer%20Cases%20and%20Deaths%20Factsheet%20FINAL%2012.11.20.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK), *The Toll of Tobacco in Maine*. Updated October 20, 2020. <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/maine>.