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TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF LD 1215: AN ACT TO END THE SALE OF FLAVORED TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Dr. Alyssa Goodwin, I am a pediatrician and parent in Brunswick, and an incoming Member of the Board of Directors of the Maine Academy of Pediatrics. I am here today to testify in support of LD 1215, An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products.

Do you know anyone who has tried to quit smoking? How long or how many times did it take them to quit successfully? Are they still smoking or vaping? My grandfather started smoking when he was 18. After many tries, he was able to successfully quit 44 years later, but the damage was done. He died from lung cancer a few years after quitting. We know better now, and yet we remain in midst of a youth nicotine addiction epidemic.

As a primary care pediatrician and school physician I have seen first-hand the devastating effects of flavored tobacco in my practice. Like many parents and health professionals, I learned about and came to understand the significance of flavored tobacco products well after the adolescent vaping epidemic was out of control in my community.

Tobacco companies have developed and promoted an array of menthol, candy, and dessert-flavored products in colorful packaging. The sole purpose of these products is to attract new younger users and addict them to tobacco. With sleek, covert packaging and fun flavors like Pop Tartz, the intent of the packaging is clear: Flavors are designed to hook kids and create a customer for life.

As I pediatrician, I can tell you with authority that kids are uniquely susceptible to nicotine addiction because their brains are still developing until about age 26.¹ Many teens vape the equivalent of one pack of cigarettes or more per day and don't even realize it. This is because of the high concentration of nicotine in the pods, hidden behind the flavors. Parents and teens are desperate for action. Last year Portland, Bangor, Brunswick and South Portland were successful in ending the sale of flavored tobacco. These communities showed up because the health of our youth is a priority. Everyone in Maine deserves the same benefit.

Our kids won't win against the tobacco industry. They are hooked before they have a chance to understand the risk. Our children deserve better. Our children deserve our protection. Please help me take a stand for Maine's children and Maine's future.

It's time to end the sale of flavored tobacco products. Please vote 'yes' on LD 1215. Thank you for your time and I'd be glad to answer any questions you may have.

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with the Office of the U.S Surgeon General and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health, 2020. <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/knowtherisks.html>. Accessed December 11, 2020.