



Maine Medical Association



March 12, 2024

Dear Maine Legislators,

We, the undersigned, write to you as health professionals on the frontlines of addiction prevention and treatment to highlight the overwhelmingly negative impact that flavored tobacco products have on our efforts to prevent and treat nicotine dependency.

Scientific research shows that flavored tobacco presents a significant on-ramp for youth addiction. Ninety percent (90%) of adult smokers started at or before they turned 18 years old,¹ and 80% of kids who have used tobacco started with a flavored product.² In Maine, among high school youth who vape, 97% use a flavored product.³ Prevention is essential to addressing the crisis of addiction facing Maine's communities, and one way to put it into practice is by ending the sale of flavored tobacco products that attract new users.

Flavored electronic cigarettes, chew and pouches are all classified and regulated as tobacco products by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and are not approved by the FDA as safe and effective tools for current smokers to quit nicotine addiction. Using flavored tobacco products as a harm reduction method for people addicted to other substances is also not supported by evidence and may deter recovery. A landmark study found that nicotine reprograms gene expression patterns, changing the behavioral response to addictive substances.⁴ The study's findings suggest that nicotine users may be more likely to develop and sustain addictions to other substances.

The safest, evidence-based strategy for treating nicotine addiction is a multi-pronged approach that includes behavioral counseling, nicotine-replacement therapy, and/or FDA-approved cessation drugs. While we provide these quit resources to smokers, we must also end the sale of flavored tobacco products that target new users and perpetuate addiction.

Sincerely,

Lani Graham, MD, MPH – Maine Medical Association
Michael Eng, MD – President-Elect, Northern New England Society of Addiction Medicine
James Berry, MD – Past-President, Northern New England Society of Addiction Medicine
Clifton F. Lord, MD, FASAM – President, Northern New England Society of Addiction Medicine
Lisa Ryan, DO – Chief of Pediatrics, Mercy Northern Light
Patrick Connolly, MD – Board of Directors, Maine Academy of Family Physicians
Noah Nesin, MD – Immediate Past-President, Maine Public Health Association
Scott Hanson, MD, MPH, FACP – President-Elect, Maine Medical Association
Laura Blaisdell, MD, MPH, FAAP – Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Deborah Hagler, MD, MPH – Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Sam Zager, MD, M.Phil, FAAFP

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking - 50 Years of Progress. A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; 2014.

² Ambrose BK, Day HR, Rostron B, et al. Flavored tobacco product use among US youth aged 12-17 years, 2013-2014. *JAMA*. 2015;314(17):1871-1873.

³ Maine Department of Health & Human Services & Maine Department of Education. Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey. 2023.

⁴ Levine A, Huang Y, Drisaldi B, Griffin EA, Pollak DD, Xu S, Yin D, Schaffran C, Kandel DB, Kandel ER. Molecular mechanism for a gateway drug: Epigenetic changes initiated by nicotine prime gene expression by cocaine. *Science Translational Medicine*. 2011;107ra109.

Paul Cain, MD – Maine Medical Association
Erik N Steele, DO – Maine Medical Association
Joe Anderson, DO – Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Sydney R. Sewall, MD, MPH – MaineGeneral
Daniel Oppenheim, PhD, MD – Maine Medical Association
Stephen B Jacobs, MD, FAAP – Androscoggin Home Healthcare and Hospice
Tara K Pelletier, DO – Maine Academy of Family Physicians
Cathra Chappelle, MD – Martin’s Point Health Care
Jill Gagne, NP – Southern Maine Health Care Pulmonary Medicine
Melissa Dorchester, Nurse Practitioner – MaineHealth
Scott Morin, DO/Pulmonary and CCM – MaineHealth
Jessie Kerr, MD, MMP – South Portland Pediatrics
Iris Silverstein, MD – Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Jennifer Hayman, MD – Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Allison Grover, MD, MSc – Maine Medical Center
Anastasia Norman, MD – Grace Health Primary Care
Melissa Burch, MD – Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Nathan Murray-James, MD – Hallowell Family Practice, LLC
Francis A. Bellino, MD, FAAFP – Maine Academy of Family Physicians
Marybeth Ford, MD – MaineHealth
D. Brian Shea, MD – Northern Light Cardiology
W. Gregory Feero, MD, PhD – Maine Dartmouth Family Medicine Residency
Gregory D’Augustine, MD – Maine Medical Association
Ned Claxton, MD
Patty Locuratolo Hymanson, MD, FAAN
Geoff Gratwick, MD
Lisa Letourneau, MD, MPH
Cortney Linville, DO
Kathryn Thorson, NP
Holly Christensen, MSN, CNM
Yasmin Mahal, DO
Meredith Jackson, MD, FAAP
Anne Coates, MD
Catherine Curry, MD
Stephanie Joy, MD
Steve Feder, DO
Lauren Jamele-Townley, DO
Austin Vaughan, Medical Student
Norma Dreyfus, MD
Ula Lewandowski, DO

Brian Youth, MD
Kathryn Diamond-Falk, MD
Pamela Dietz, MD
Martha E. McCarthy, MD, FAAP
Clota Snow, MD
Michelle Harris, MD
Kurt Kelley, MD
Cathy Reed, LCSW
Elizabeth Roe, Med
Jeffrey A. Stone, DO
Ben Hagopian, MD, MPH
Linda Schumacher-Feero, MD
C. Elizabeth Trefts, MD
Patrick Rapuano, MD
Erin F. Flynn, MD
TerryAnn Scriven, MD
Aaron Wallace, MD
Rosamund Davis, MD
Jane Ho, MD
Calvin Schaffer, MD
Jennifer Zorn, LCPC-c, LADC
Monique Rafuse, LCPC, CADC
Kathryn Mitchell, LCPC
Geeta Godara, MD
Susan Simpson, LSW
Amy Carole, BA
Julia Oppenheimer, MD
Maria E. Moutinho, MD
Carissa Fowers, BSN, OMS-III
Scott Schiff-Slater, MD
Don Burke, LCPC, LADC, MEd Counseling
Genevieve Whiting, MD, FAAP
Kelly Parker-Mello, MD
Jodie Hermann, DO
Brendan Prast, MD
Paul C. Santamore, MS in Counseling and MS Education Leadership (Principal Certification in Maine) – Old Orchard Beach High School