



Mid-Atlantic Petroleum Distributors Association  
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To: Senate Finance Committee

From: Ellen Valentino

Date: February 13, 2020

Re: SB 233 BR Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition  
Opposed - Retailer Perspective

From the retailer perspective there are harsh consequences if SB 233 were to pass. Consequences that are not solely based in economics but consequences that center around criminal activity.

The fiscal note speaks to the cost to small business owners and loss to retail sales should legal products be banned for sale at Maryland's retail locations. Approximately 6700 Maryland retailers will feel the negative impacted.

To be clear, we do not defend the vaping and tobacco companies. However, we have a responsibility to share the reality and situation we see every day on the street and in our stores. There is rapidly growing criminal activity that is no longer "underground" but "open air" in parts of Maryland. ***The passage of this legislation will make for the first time a legal product exclusively available for sale by gangs/criminals on our parking lots and streets.***

With each new tax and with the increased age of 21 the street market has grown. Dealing in cigarettes/tobacco is lucrative and comes with very little consequence if you are under the age of 21. And one thing we can all agree on – criminals don't request ID or pay taxes. Maryland's retailers do.

This bill is a missed opportunity and will not substantially reduce underage tobacco and vaping use. As retailers committed to Maryland, we can be part of the solution and have proven that in previous collaborative efforts.

Please vote unfavorable and do not put us at this disadvantage.

**Feeding and fueling the economy through gas, coffee, food, heating oil and propane.**

MAPDA is an association of convenience stores and energy distributors in Maryland, Delaware & the District of Columbia.