

Sal Filippelli
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Good afternoon Chairman and members of the committee,

My name is Sal Filippelli and I'm the owner of Harbor Vapor in Baltimore City. Using strawberry flavored vapor helped me quit smoking and inspired me to open a store to help others quit tobacco cigarettes. Harbor Vapor has now been open for nearly 6 years and has help thousands of customers quit and stay off of cigarettes with the help of various flavors.

It became clear to us very early on that flavored vapor products helped adults quit and stay off of cigarettes. Adults find that using flavors other than tobacco helps them stay off of cigarettes by breaking the mental connection with the taste of tobacco. It has been proven that cigarettes are dangerous and our customers want to have the choice of a better alternative. Our customers have seen the benefits of switching to vapor products and want to continue to have that option. Less than 5% of our sales are tobacco flavor and it proves that adults enjoy and want choices in flavors.

Some of my adult customers use disposable vapor devices that the Comptroller has enacted a ban on this week. This decision will only remove one more choice for them in using an alternative to cigarettes. Even with the disposable devices the most popular sellers were the various flavored ones.

A full out ban on flavors will force my business to close, which is how my employees and myself provide for our families. It will force all shops in Maryland to endure the same fate, which adds up hundreds of stores with thousands of employees. Small businesses are the cornerstones of our communities and this will seal their fate. Vape shops take their responsibility of only selling to adults seriously and to my knowledge not one vapor store in Maryland has been fined for selling to minors. Owner operators who have a vested interest in making sure we comply with all laws run many of the stores. I truly believe this why we have been so successful in these audits. We have taken great pride in only selling to adult customers, which cannot be said for other types of stores. Only adults are allowed in our stores and we verify each customers age before purchase.

I recommend an exemption for vapor stores to be allowed to continue selling flavored vapor products. This will allow us to continue to provide our adult customers with the products they so desire. Adults deserve the right to have a choice in the products they buy, no matter what industry. Please help us to continue to give adults smokers in Maryland a choice when it comes to switching from deadly tobacco cigarettes. Their lives literally depend on it.

Thank you for your time,

Sal Filippelli