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Good Afternoon Chairman and members of the committee,

I am here to ask you for the amendment that the MVA has proposed to this bill, an exemption for vape shops. I have been in front of this committee now for over 3 years and once again I'm here trying to fight for my livelihood. I am a disabled Veteran of the United States Army living with Multiple Sclerosis and I have 3 kids. The vapor industry gave me a second chance at a financial future while helping me to quit cigarettes using flavored vapor. We agree that kids should not be using these products. We are in favor in truly punitive repercussions for retailers that sell to minors. It's time to start taking away these people's ability to do business.

Speaking of taking away people's ability to do business a flavor ban does just that for vape shops. Vapor is the only product we sell, and we have had an excellent track record in **NOT** selling to minors proven by the compliance checks done by the state of Maryland and the FDA. A flavor ban only hurts small businesses and while we go out of business the people who are actively selling to minors will stay in business and proliferate. This bill hands the vapor industry in Maryland over to Big Tobacco, JUUL, black markets and the convenience stores, the Wal-Marts, the CVS's and the tobacco stores who are proven to be selling these products to minors and they will continue to do so.

I have been serving on the Comptrollers vapor taskforce. Last month I reported to the committee that disposable vapor products would be the new JUUL which we all know has been the #1 problem with our youth. Delivering extremely high volumes of nicotine in a very short time to our youth. We will continue to work with state legislators and the comptroller to identify these trends among our youth and help combat underage usage and availability. Our actions reaffirm our stance on underage usage because we believe these products are only for adults who want to transition away from cigarettes.

This bill will also force thousands of Marylanders back into smoking cigarettes or black markets which we know destroy families. You can read firsthand from the people you will send back into smoking by the postcards presented here today. If you read any of the thousands of postcards here today, you will hear stories about how flavors helped them quit cigarettes and that tobacco flavors are nasty and that's exactly what these adults are trying to stay away from.

We vigorously urge you to accept the amendment we have proposed and save small businesses and the families attached to them. I also want to urge you to start punishing retailers that sell to minors with more than just a fine, so we don't have to be back here next year fighting for our livelihood again.