

Good afternoon, esteemed members of the committee. My name is Hitesh Patel, the owner of Beer and Soda Drive Thru in Crisfield and I oppose the proposed vapor ban in c-stores.

I have already experienced the detrimental effects of a previous excise tax increase on cigarettes. Just a few years ago, I virtually testified when the excise tax was raised by a staggering \$17.50 per carton. Unfortunately, the consequences were severe, as I lost over 50% of my in-store sales and I'm afraid that I won't be able to sustain if SB1056 passes. It is important to note that my business is already grappling with the recent increase in the minimum wage, which took effect in January. This additional financial strain creates an overwhelming burden that threatens the very survival of my business with customers being forced to go to another store for Adult Vapor products.

If SB1056 is implemented, I will be left with no choice but to cut hours or lay off employees. As a responsible employer, this is a decision I deeply regret having to consider. My employees are responsible hardworking individuals that rely on their jobs to support themselves and their families, and it pains me to think that their livelihoods may be at stake due to this ban.

I implore you to consider the long-term consequences of this Vapor ban on small businesses like mine. We are the backbone of our communities, providing essential goods and services to our customers. By burdening us with this ban you not only jeopardize our livelihoods but also hinder our ability to contribute responsibly to the local economy.

In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider SB1056 negative impact on my business, potential layoffs, and the cumulative burden of recent minimum wage increases are simply too great to bear. I implore you to seek alternative solutions that do not disproportionately harm small businesses like mine. Thank you for your time and consideration.