

My name is Humayun Raja, I own 2 businesses one in Hampstad, MD and another in Greenbelt. I have operated the Greenbelt location for 20 years and the Hampstead location for 5 years. We employ a total of 25 employees in both establishments.

I oppose House Bill #1073. This bill will significantly disrupt both of my businesses. With inflation we have already started to see lower operating profit. Back in 2021 the excise tax increase of \$1.75 had already made a significant negative impact on my businesses, and dealing with COVID at the same time was putting a lot of pressure on both my businesses.

If this excise tax goes through I will have to shell out \$117,000 per year to make up for the tax increase. That leads to many issues. First would be safety of my employees as my businesses will be targeted more due to my large inventory of cigarettes. Currently we employ 25 employees, with the tax increase I will have to downsize my payroll to make up for the additional \$117,000 per year that I don't have right now. The employees of my establishments depend on my business for their livelihood. Most of my employees have been employed with us for 5+ years. Some of them have been with me for 20 years since we started. We pride ourselves in the customer service we are able to provide to our patrons but with the excise tax increase that will also most likely be affected due to downsizing of my staff. Right now we are open 24 hours a day, but that will also be in jeopardy due to the downsizing of my payroll.

Regards Humayun Raja