

My name is Samreen Yameen, and I am the proud owner of Winterplace Market in Salisbury for the past eight years. I strongly oppose HB 1073.

One of the main concerns I have with this bill is its potential impact on my business and the local economy. As a convenience store located just 15 minutes away from the Delaware border, where cigarettes are already cheaper, this tax increase will undoubtedly drive my customers to purchase their cigarettes out of state. However, it's important to note that these customers also purchase other products from my store, such as groceries and household items. If they choose to buy their cigarettes elsewhere, it will not only hurt my tobacco sales but also impact the overall revenue of my business.

The increase in the minimum wage and the proposed bill to squeeze margins on lottery sales will further strain the profitability of my business. As a small business owner, it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with these constant financial burdens. If this bill passes, the consequences will be dire for my business. I will be forced to make difficult decisions, such as laying off reliable workers who have been hard to find in recent times.

After the last excise tax increase on cigarettes, my store was broken in to after we were closed. The thieves did not steal any money or break into my cash register. Instead, they stole 10 cartons of cigarettes worth more than \$1,000. By increasing the tax, you increase the inventory holding costs for retailers as well, making cigarettes a bigger target for theft.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider the detrimental effects that HB 1073 will have on small businesses like mine. Increasing the excise tax on cigarettes will not only drive customers away but also force me to make tough decisions that will impact the livelihoods of my employees. Thank you for your time and consideration.