

My name is Rafiq Lakhani, I manage and run Fenton Street Station in Silver Spring, Maryland. I have managed Fenton Street Station for 12 years, and I have 10 employees running my location.

I oppose House Bill Number 1073. This bill will devastate my business. Already with inflation being this high, the cost of carrying products is putting a lot of pressure in running a store. Also, the excise tax increase of \$1.75 back in 2021 cut into my profit. My customers come everyday and complain why the prices are so high, tobacco and non tobacco items. If this bill goes through my carrying cost will go up \$15,600 as an average for the full year. This additional money, I don't have. Because cigarettes prices have gone up over the course of many years, my store could be target for criminals, and that could jeopardize the safety of my employees.

At the present time, my store is open 24 hours, but I might have to close the store down at midnight because I might have to cut down on my staff if the revenue isn't there. A lot of my employees have been with me for three plus years or so, and their families are depending on my establishment for income.

Regards,

Rafiq Lakhani