

02.23.2024

HB1073 Bill – Zoom Group LLC

My name is Mansoor Anvari I have been operating multiple businesses in Maryland for the last 29 years. I have employed many people over the years. I am opposed to the HB 1073 bill that would increase carton costs by \$7.50. The following is a list of some of my locations.

Waterloo Exxon-7930 Washington Blvd, Jessup, Md 20794 (10 employees)

Lyndwood Exxon- 6070 Marshalee Dr, Elkridge, Md 21075 (6 employees)

Johns Hopkins Exxon- 7570 Montpelier Rd, Laurel 20723 (15 employees)

Columbia Liberty- 6425 Dobbin Center way, Columbia, Md 21045 (6 employees)

Gude Drive Liberty- 1298 E Gude Drive, Rockville, Md 20850 (10 employees)

Jessup Bp- 8810 Washington Blvd, Jessup, Md 20794 (6 employees)

Middletown shell-4304 Old national Pike, Middletown, Md 21769

Shell Food Mart- 5707 Cherrywood Ln, Greenbelt, Md 20770

The proposed bill HB1073 has many impacts that would be affecting my business' if this bill were to pass. Carrying costs would become an astronomical expense. With the stores we have, the size ranges and quantities of the tobacco the cost just to buy and carry these products would be so high and unmanageable with the already high inflation costs we are dealing with on all products, not just tobacco. As of right now, the customers we do have are struggling and do not need other products to be raised. Not only does this hurt our business it will also hurt the customers.

The rise in inflation, especially tobacco will cause a dangerous environment not just for our business and employees but also our customers. If a bill like this were to pass the amount of theft would increase exponentially. Right now, in the U.S. everyone is already dealing with crimes such as theft and violence. By taxing tobacco higher, this bill is only adding to the violence and crime rates since we are already dealing with high prices and costs throughout the country. As a community we do not need to add to any of these problems or heighten inflation or crime.

Everyone is suffering from inflation. The cost of products are high, which in turn has made us raise the price of the products we are selling. People are suffering and increasing the cost per carton by \$7.50 not only will deter people from buying or coming inside our stores it will also cause people to start going outside of the state or go to the black market to buy cheap alternatives.

As of now, the minimum wage has gone up to \$15, there is a bill trying to cut our lottery commission by .5% which we fought so hard to get and now this bill wants to raise the cartons of tobacco?

If this bill passes, not only, will it be hard to keep customers, but it is one step closer to having our business's go under. This bill does not benefit the community nor the business owners. This bill is leading to the downfall of small businesses as well as contributing to inflation and will do the opposite to help inflation. If you want inflation to go back down, you need people to spend money and adding a \$7.50 tax per carton cost in turn will deter anyone from buying not just tobacco but other items within the businesses. This will be a gateway to harmful crimes, violence as well as black market activity. You will see a lot more of the white vans selling tobacco in parking lots and a lot more deaths just from people trying to get cheaper tobacco.

The last thing we want as a small business is to not be able to support our employees and customers. The 2021 SET increase has already shown us some of the precursors and damaging effects it has had on our businesses. After the \$1.75 increase in 2021 not only did we experience more crimes like theft on tobacco we also were never able to regain our clientele instead we got angry clients screaming and yelling at us from the reflection on product pricing. With rising costs such as rent, product costs, gas, electricity, water, wages, etc., we are not able to keep running a business the way it needs to be for our community needs and wants. Passing HB1073 is detrimental to small independent businesses in Maryland.

Key takeaways:

- Carrying cost will be astronomical.
- Higher theft/crimes
- Major safety concerns for our employees and customers
- Adding to inflation
- Adding to the black market
- Tobacco being sold through vans in parking lots.
- Our businesses dealing with the other bills, like cutting our lottery commission, growing minimum wages etc.

My hope is that you take into consideration my points about the effects on our business' and not approve this bill.

Thank you.

Mansoor Anvari

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