

My name is Waheed Chaudry. I'm the owner of Spring Ridge Exxon and Air Park Petro in Gaithersburg, Maryland. I employ 10 employees both stores put together.

I oppose House Bill 1073. If this bill goes through, I have to make drastic changes to my business. First, my carrying cost on cigarettes will go by \$78,000 for the full year. This leads to additional headaches for my business, when it comes to cash flow and safety of my employees. Both of my stores will be a target for individuals who might want to commit a crime, i.e., robbery. This leads to safety of my employees as well. I don't want them facing harm.

In 2021, the State Excise Tax went by \$1.75 a pack, and I lost about 30% of my tobacco revenue. Now with a 75 cents more tax added, this will lead to more losses for me. I'm a small business owner, and I can't make up for all these losses. I'll most likely have to cut down on cost, that could mean cutting down my payroll. My employees depend on me for their livelihood, and if they get laid off, that would be devastating to their families and to me as well. These employees have worked for me for a long time, and we are a close knit group.

Inflation has already cut into my profits, less customers are coming to my stores to buy tobacco items, and non tobacco items. I'm barely getting by each and every day. Thanks for your time.

Waheed Chaudry