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Planet Of The Vapes

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Firstly, I'd like to thank the chair and committee members for allowing us the time to share our concerns over the proposed legislation. My name is Jenna Anthony and I'm the owner of a small vape shop in Pasadena, Maryland. If passed in its current form this bill will cause serious damage to our industry.

This industry is comprised of mom and pop businesses like mine that simply cannot survive an excessive wholesale tax. If this legislation passes in its current form, most of the shops in Maryland will close our doors for good. The economic impact will be severe.

When I started my business 6 years ago, it was because I knew our products helped adults quit traditional tobacco products for a healthier alternative. I knew this because it helped me. As a pack a day smoker of 12 years, I had tried the patch, cold turkey, the gums, hypnosis, and everything in between to no avail. I never liked tobacco flavors but was immediately able to transition to vaping using fruit, candy, and dessert e-liquid flavors.

Moreover, I am proud to say after over 5 years of vaping and slowly lowering the amount of nicotine, I was also able to completely quit using a vape all together. I have now been completely tobacco free for over 6 years and nicotine free for almost a year.

By passing this bill you will take away the best option for combatting the tobacco epidemic. Not only will it remove vaping as an option for adults, it will also fall short of keeping vapes and tobacco out of the hands of children.

While that last point may seem counterintuitive, please let me elaborate. It is important to note that over two years, the state of Maryland in conjunction with the FDA performed a sting operation to catch and document underage sale of tobacco and vapor products. During that two year period not one single vape shop was cited for underage sale. Not one. However, hundreds of underage sales took place in stores like CVS, Walgreens, Royal Farms, and Exxon. This legislation will likely shut the doors of the only stores consistently upholding the state age laws.

Furthermore, the only companies that could possibly withstand an onerous wholesale tax or

flavor ban are ones with massive funding like Juul, Vuse, and Blu. With the backing of big tobacco, these companies have endless resources and massive marketing firms behind them.

History has taught us that banning things in lieu of sensible regulation only serves to create a black market that puts the banned products in the hands of individuals who have no regard for keeping these products out of the hands of kids.

In closing, Juul and their ilk are not representative of our industry. We, who stand before you today, are mothers, fathers, coaches, and community members who share your concerns regarding keeping vapes out of the hands of kids. Please, rethink your approach. Let's work on a sensible point of sale tax that won't push small businesses out and open the door for Juul to take over. Rethink banning the sale of flavored vapor products and instead keep them limited to sale within licensed vape shops. Together, we can absolutely keep kids safe while still not denying adults the best shot at quitting tobacco for good.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Jenna Anthony