

February 4, 2020

RE: HB 3/SB 233- Business Regulation - Flavored Tobacco Products - Prohibition

Dear Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

I am writing today to ask you to oppose HB3/SB233 entitled "Business Regulation - Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition" As a small business owner in Baltimore, I believe my fellow business owners and, more broadly, my fellow citizens of Maryland suffer from the bill's passage.

My firm is a family owned and operated retail store and such a flavored tobacco ban could be catastrophic to small retailers like me, as well as my employees and our community, with potentially little public health benefit. We understand addressing flavors in vape products to address illegal youth usage but youth cigarette usage is at historic lows.

On top of the other effects on my business, contraband sales would make my neighborhood less safe as it is associated with rises in other kinds of criminality, not to mention confrontations between illicit sellers and law enforcement. Contraband sales could increase the number of cigarettes distributed by illicit sellers who don't abide by legal restrictions, or the voluntary We Card initiative, as my business successfully does. Such sales could undermine the years of progress made in reducing underage access to tobacco products.

I can assure you that my business will remain on the front lines of efforts to keep tobacco products out of the hands of young people – but that is not possible if an abrupt menthol ban puts me and other retailers like me out of business.

I respectfully ask that you oppose this legislation.

Sincerely,

  
Jitender Sidh  
President