

My name is Candice Gott, I am a small business owner in the community and a member of the Maryland Vapor Alliance. Thank you for allowing me to be here today.

I would like to talk about the flavor that hooked me to cigarettes at the ripe young age of 15. The flavor was called: Whatever I could get my hands on. I wanted to fit in with my friends, and I was curious about them.

The data from the CDC aligns with my previous statement. Per the CDC data released December of 2019, teens are trying e-cigs for reasons OTHER than flavors 78% of the time. With the biggest reason being curiosity. Are we going to ban curiosity?

The CDC has confirmed that illicit marijuana cartridges laced with an oil called vitamin E acetate is to blame for the recent lung illnesses. Nicotine e-liquid cannot be the cause of this because Nicotine e-liquid is water soluble and does not contain ANY oil. This can easily be checked because all nicotine e-liquid had to register an ingredients list with the FDA.

After smoking for 15 years and trying every approved cessation product to quit, I finally stopped by a vape shop. I got a green apple e-liquid and I have not smoked since that day.

I knew if I could quit smoking cigarettes using this method, that anyone could. It's the reason I used every penny I had to open my vape shop. After almost 6 years of business I have no doubt that I have helped thousands quit combustible cigarettes because of flavored e-liquids.

I'd also like to point out that when an adult is trying to quit smoking, tobacco is what they want to move away from. Why would we condition ANYONE to tobacco flavors? We are essentially normalizing tobacco flavoring with this legislation... why would we do that?

The products that I sell are different from Juul or Big Tobacco. Juul is what is found in convenience stores, Maryland vape shops do not carry Juul. Per the National Youth Tobacco Survey, Juul is the product teens are using most. It is why recently the FDA decided to remove flavored pods from the market. The FDA followed the data to see that teens are not using the open systems that adults use and are sold in vape shops. This move by the FDA preserves open systems for the adult market. The same open systems that have helped millions of adults quit cigarettes.

A flavor ban will put hundreds of Maryland vape shops out of business, leaving only Juul and other big tobacco products on the market. It will bankrupt me and leave my 13 employees who depend on their income without a job.

The saddest part of this legislation is it punishes the good actors. Maryland vape shops have not had a failed compliance check in the last 2 years.

A flavor ban would also open a huge black market, as I'm sure you are aware on the black market there will be no quality control, ID Checks, or collected taxes.

I'm urging the Maryland lawmakers to pass this bill with the proposed amendments. We can work together to have the lowest smoking rate in the United States and the lowest youth vaping rate as well. If you pass this bill as is, Maryland will be looking for ways to back-pedal and undo insurmountable damage in the coming years, much like how other prohibitions have played out.

Very Respectfully,
Candice Gott
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