

To: Maryland Senate - Finance Committee

From: Sarah Halik (resident)  
Severn, MD - Anne Arundel County

Re: Written Testimony regarding:  
SB54 - Electronic Smoking Devices - Added Flavoring - Prohibition on shipping, import, or sale  
SB233 - Business Regulation - Flavored Tobacco Products - Prohibition SB410 - Electronic  
Smoking Devices - Flavor Prohibition

Chair and committee members,

My name is Sarah Halik. I am an Army combat veteran and government contractor residing in Anne Arundel county. I am here today to express my opposition to the bills that would ban flavored vape liquids and exorbitantly increase the taxation on the remaining products.

Contrary to popular belief, not every person who vapes is a former cigarette smoker.

Over the span of 10 years I have deployed five times. It seems that I have always been in the minority of individuals who do not smoke cigarettes while overseas. I would often join coworkers after work to shop at the bazaar or hang out at the hookah lounge. It became a social activity that I enjoyed specifically because of the wide variety of flavors. I eventually purchased my own hookah and continued to utilize it after returning stateside. Although it is not something I used every day, the amount of nicotine inhaled in a 1 to 2-hour hookah session is incredibly high - more than 2-3 packs of cigarettes. Because of this, I began to seek out a healthier alternative which is how I discovered vaping. It was the perfect option for me to be able to have complete control over the amount of nicotine I inhaled while still offering a wide variety of flavor options.

In the four years I have been vaping, I have not used a hookah.

I do not consider myself a smoker and a flavor ban will not suddenly force me into buying cigarettes. But what it will do is take away the option I have to a healthier alternative for an activity I enjoy. It is a freedom I've earned and an option I have as an adult to make choices for myself.

I believe there are better alternatives to a flavor ban that will still help prevent minors from consuming a product that was never meant for them:

Restricting the type of businesses allowed to sell vape products  
Require digital verification of government ID's prior to any purchase  
Enforce penalties for sales to minors

Any of these options would be preferred over the alternative. A flavor ban punishes the legitimate customers and vape shops but does not prevent a minor from acquiring a vape product. I can identify and agree with the concern for the safety of minors. But prohibition does not provide a solution, it only denies adults the freedom of options.

Thank you for your time and consideration.