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Hello and thanks for allowing me this opportunity. My name is Charles Gott, im 37 years old, and operate 3 Small vape shops out of the tri county southern Md region. I was a devout smoker for 16 years with no signs of quitting in site until I was introduced to flavored eliquid. I was shocked by the results of how quickly I transitioned from cigarettes to flavored vapor. Having flavored ejuice with completely customizable nicotine strengths was just what I needed to 100% quit smoking. I was completely convinced that this had to be the largest health intervention of my time. I dumped my life savings into the first shop, Servicing the community one smoker at a time quickly grew one shop into a second and a third. 6 years later here we are....

We are a full service vapor lounge. We are not big tobacco and we do not sell juul or any other big tobacco products. Being a total full service vapor lounge defines us by at least 70% of sales coming from that of vapor products and flavored eliquid. Vapor products and flavored eliquid make up more like 95% of our sales. An 86% wholesale tax would completely bankrupt us and every other total full service vapor lounge in MD. Out of business overnight! Literally... It would leave myself and 13 employees completely out of business along with hundreds of other shops and their employees. We have slowly acquired a lot of inventory over 6 years in business and would have no way to foot such a steep proposed floor tax. I don't know of a small business that could. Do you? Unlike a gas station or convenience store we don't have gasoline, auto products, chips and snacks, alcohol etc to make up any deficits due to flavor bans or hellasish taxes. Pennsylvania put a 40% wholesale tax on their vapor lounges nearly closing up 200 overnight. I cant believe this is what you would want for your fellow Marylanders and or constituents.

We are not opposed to a reasonable tax. We know its necessary to keep things moving in our state and we want to help by all means. However, putting us out of business will result in a 0% tax for the state and Leaving you and I with a black market that will be good for no one except those who exploit those markets for a way of living. Items obtained on the black market will have little to no quality control and most definitely wont be paying into state taxes. Leaving none other than Juul and the rest of the big tobacco products to continue to decimate our communities and kill generations to come.

Depending who you ask in this room vaping may have several different faces but to the tens of thousands who currently use flavored vaping products, and there are 1000s here in MD who will whole heartily testify to you that what they have found is a product that makes them feel better with far less side effects and health risk associated unlike cigarettes. fact remains, 480,000 people die from smoking related illnesses each year. Don't you want to be on the side of history that begins to reduce this

number? I do! Moving toward a smoke free nation starts with getting our people off cigarettes and other known harmful tobacco products first! Proposing an 86% wholesale tax offers no incentives to people who want to quit smoking, who need to quit smoking.... We can argue studies and graphs but what you cant argue is the 1000s of real life individuals who believe we are on the healthier path to a better cleaner way of living. Please consider the amendments proposed by the Maryland vapor alliance that wont shut us down nor deter the need to switch to a cleaner alternative of nicotine delivery.