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HB732

Good Afternoon, my name is Melissa Hendrix, and thank you for allowing me to speak today. I smoked for 22 years before I was introduced into vaping. I am very passionate about vaping as it has saved me and my family from smoking. This tax will shut down Maryland vape shops, loss in tax revenue for the state of Maryland, higher unemployment rates, a rise in black market, and a rise in public health concerns. Something I hear often from my customers is how good they feel after a month of not picking up a cigarette. Imposing HB732 will take this option away from adult smokers because fully stocked vape shops will not be able to survive a tax as high as 86% wholesale + floor tax. Not only would this shut vape shops down you will still be left with Juul which is sold in stores where those under the age of 21 can enter and work. This would also be a loss in tax revenue because shops would shut down and most will drive elsewhere to purchase their products or make it themselves because the price is too high and they want flavors.

Remember smoking is an addiction not everyone can easily put down. More customers come in not happy that their flavors have been taken off the shelves at the convenience stores and they have had to switch the device they currently use to have a flavor. Vape shops offer a unique experience to help the customer drop down on the nicotine not gas stations or convenience stores. I have been told that if they impose a tax most will return to cigarettes because they will not see the cost difference and now, we are putting a price on our health. Vaping has helped thousands of Marylanders transition from combustible cigarettes.

We have already seen what a large wholesale tax will do on small businesses, but it will not hurt big tobacco the ones who are leading the way with what the children want easy to use, compact, nic buzz, oh and cheap.