

To Maryland Lawmakers:

I am a business owner of three Maryland businesses that sell tobacco products. We respectfully followed along with your decision to raise the sale of tobacco age to 21+. We lost a lot of loyal customers that legally bought tobacco products which in turn has already lost us a lot in sales. As a small business owner, I cannot afford to lose more business that the flavor ban in "HB 134" will bring with it. My businesses already struggle to compete with large corporations around the area. We are also on the close borders of West Virginia and Pennsylvania, which will drive our sales and tax money to neighboring states.

Our small businesses have been in business for 30+ years. We have 50 employees and some that have worked for us for 17+ years. We compete with large corporations by offering a lot of benefits that most convenience stores do not offer including vacation pay, premium pay on Sundays, birthday pay, and yearly bonuses. My Maryland stores are already competing with my West Virginia stores minimum wage of \$8.75 to stay afloat with the yearly raises of minimum wage to capping out at \$15.00. This "HB 134" is not going to help anything except for run my stores out of business, put 50 people out of work and chase them to unemployment and welfare.

We fight very hard to make it in the economy that we are currently dealing with. We make sure that we provide an economic stance as well as our larger competitors. We help tremendously by giving the state of Maryland income by paying our dues and taxes every year. We comply with any other stances and decisions that our great state of Maryland might come up with to make sure our children are safe and tobacco free, but the "HB 134" is something that I am going to fight against. My sales in tobacco help make a large portion of my sales totals. My small businesses with surely expire if the "HB 134" moves forward.

Please oppose "House Bill 134" to ban menthol cigarettes, flavored snuff, and flavored cigars to help us small businesses survive this ever changing and sometimes unforgiving economic situation we are in.

Sincerely,

Ken Farley

Westernport Foods Inc.

Rite Price

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Fair Price

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