

Date: February 3, 2021

Written Testimony to oppose Menthol/Flavor Ban Bill Number HB 134

I, Mr. Naresh Kumar, am the owner of Waterloo Shell in Jessup/Elkridge Maryland. My store is located in Howard County in a very busy intersection off Washington Blvd and Route 175. I employ 7 employees at the Waterloo Shell.

The Menthol/Flavor Ban will destroy my business as well as destroy the lives of my existing seven employees. Let me go through the numbers, I buy \$480,000 per year worth of goods from my local wholesaler, that includes Tobacco, and other items for the convenience store. My Tobacco inventory is strictly 60%-70% of flavored/menthol products and that's what I sell day in and day out. If this goes in effect, I will lose \$336,000 worth of revenue out of the \$480,000 per year, that's a big deal.

Getting to my employees, I employ 7 cashiers/managers. If I lose 70% of my business, I'll most likely lay off 5 of the employees. Who's going to take care of their families? Most of these employees have been with me for many years. This will devastate their families and their finances.

From what I have read, banning something isn't the solution. Customers will go out of their way to go buy their products that they like somewhere else. I'm surrounded by Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, DC, and Pennsylvania that don't have a ban on any of these flavored items. My customers will go out to these states to buy these items that they prefer. Not only am I going to lose my tobacco sales but other basket items like, chips, candy, sodas, and lottery. I'll lose my gas business as well. My store is off Interstate 95 which is heavily travelled every day. My transient customers won't stop by my store to pump gas, they'll either pump gas in Virginia going south or Delaware going up north.

Lastly, this ban will promote illegal activities like guys bringing product from other states, and selling them illegally right in front of my store or other stores in the area. The guy who might sell these products isn't going to card anyone, and we don't know whether any of those products have been tampered with. It isn't good anyway you look at it. I run a legitimate business, I card whoever buys tobacco products at my store, and I purchase all my tobacco products from a legitimate wholesaler based in Maryland.

Sincerely

Naresh Kumar

Owner of Waterloo Shell