

Date: February 3, 2021

Written Testimony to oppose HB 134

I, Mr. Patel, am the owner of Montgomery Exxon in Elkridge, Maryland. My store is located in Howard County off Washington Blvd.

The Menthol/Flavor Ban will devastate my business, my employees, and my family. I buy close to \$450,000 worth of products per year from my local wholesaler and majority of those items are flavored tobacco products like Menthols, flavored cigars and flavored chewing tobacco. These items make up 70%-80% of my overall sales in my convenience store in terms of sales of tobacco products. So about \$360,000 of sales of these items per year will be wiped out instantly if this proposed ban goes through.

I employ 12 workers, and majority of them are full time employees, and have been with for a long time. If I lose 70% to 80% of my tobacco business, I'll most likely have to lay off 7 to 9 of my employees. Being unemployed is just horrible, and where are they going to go? Who is going to pay their house rent, their car payment, and food they have to buy to feed their families?

I sell legal products dictated by the State. I buy all the tobacco products from a legal wholesaler based in Maryland. I card all my customers who come through the door who buy adult tobacco products. Smoking age now is gone to 21, and I fully support it even if I have lost some revenue due to the raising the minimum age to smoke. If this ban goes into effect, customers will get their products illegally through other channels and that leads to black market.

My store parallels Interstate 95, I have customers who come from the north and south. If this ban takes goes into effect, customers from out of state won't stop by to pump gas or buy any items in my store. They'll just go a few miles into Virginia or DC or go up north to Delaware to buy their preferred tobacco items and other items as well. The State of Maryland will lose more than just the tobacco sales, they'll lose the gas sales, sales of lottery as well as sales of other convenience store items.

In closing, please take a close look at this, it's going to be devastating to local businesses in Maryland. It will ruin my business, my employees and my family!!!

Sincerely

Mr. Patel

Montgomery Exxon

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