

Date: February 7, 2021

Written Testimony to oppose HB 134

I, Raj Chopra, own five 7-11s in Maryland. All my 7-11s that I own are in Prince Georges County.

The Menthol/Flavor Ban will devastate my business, my employees, and my family. I buy approximately over two million dollars worth of tobacco products from my wholesaler per year in all these locations combined. The Menthol/flavored tobacco products make up 60%-70% of my overall sales in my convenience stores as an average. That means I will lose \$1.6 million in revenue loss per year if this ban goes through.

I have 35 employees who work for me, all five stores combined, majority of them are full time employees, and have been with me for a long time. If I lose 60% to 70% of my flavored tobacco business, I'll most likely have to lay off 20 to 25 of my employees. Being unemployed is just worst thing that could happen to a human being. My employees will be devastated, and their families whom they take care of as well. Worst case scenario, I'll most likely close some of my stores if I don't see enough revenue coming in.

Two of my 7-11s are next to Interstate 495, next to the Beltway. My customers will just cross into Virginia, and buy their tobacco products of their liking, especially the flavored products. Virginia has no ban on any of these flavored products. Three of my other stores are just two to three miles from the DC border, my customers will just go there to buy their flavored tobacco products. DC doesn't have any ban of these flavored products either.

Another issue is this will lead to criminal activity. You're going to have individuals who will beat the system by going and buying these banned products from another state and bring them over and sell them in front of my stores. This leads to issues with public safety, my customers will be fearful of coming into my store. Law Enforcement will have a tough time monitoring these activities, and it puts them at risk enforcing these laws.

I want to close by saying, this ban will ruin by businesses, my employees jobs, their families and my family. The State of Maryland will lose a lot of revenue because customers will go to bordering states to buy their flavored tobacco products.

Truly,

Raj Chopra

Owner of the following stores

7-11, 4404 Knox Road, College Park, MD

7-11, 7201 Baltimore Avenue, College Park, MD

7-11, 6315 Baltimore Avenue, Riverdale, MD

7-11, 7611 Allentown Road, Fort Washington, MD

7-11, 3411 Dallas Drive, Marlow Heights, MD

