

Walker Enterprises LLC

Dbm/MaddCatt Vapors
200 S. George Street
Cumberland, MD 21502

February 13, 2021

Re: Opposition of SB 177, HB 134

Dear Chairman and Committee Members:

My name is Penny Walker and I am a former smoker and owner of two full-service awarding winning vape shops with twenty-five total employees. Health Insurance and a livable wage is provided for all employees, the company bares 80% of the health insurance burden.

As a smoker since I was 14 years of age, I had tried everything to quit. Finally, on December 6, 2011, I was able to successfully quit smoking by using an electronic cigarette and a raspberry flavor. I was successful on my first attempt at vaping at age 41. I had finally quit. I was unsuccessful with gum, patches, straws, Chantix, and a prescription nicotine delivery system. I was suffering from early fibrosis of my left lower lung. I had finally quit.

I was so excited about this transformative technology that I opened a vape shop in 2012. Due to a large number of customers traveling from Washington County, I opened a second vape shop in 2014 in that adjacent county. I applied my love of cooking to e-liquid, developing flavors/recipes and helping others to quit smoking. I continued for seven years to build and run both vape shops while working full-time at Maryland Legal Aid, a non-profit public interest law firm.

Every single person who smokes wants to quit! Banning flavors will simply make people go back to smoking, vape shops will close their doors and a black market will surface. Between the black market and the folks who will resume smoking, it would be a public health disaster.

I could recite numbers and studies, but I think a more practical and interesting approach is to tell you what my observations are based on helping thousands of members of my community transfer their habit to a much safer alternative.

1. People do come in thinking they want a flavor to replicate their favorite cigarette. In fact, people want it to taste just like their favorite cigarette. As they quit smoking and usually within a week to ten days their taste buds return, they realize how bad the flavor actually is and switch to a fruit or something more appealing. This happens really quickly. Some folks go straight to a flavor. Either way, very quickly flavors become the main attraction and comprise 90% of our e-liquid sales.
2. People can't seem to quit smoking and we have been working on this since the 1970's. We all know someone who was becoming very ill and has smoked right up until the day they passed away or were hospitalized. It is a serious addiction and if we had a

treatment this successful for opioids, we would all celebrate right now. Smoking kills more people than opioids, albeit slower.

3. Adults like flavors. I like flavors. All of you like flavors. I have a 70-year old man who will never quit vaping, but he doesn't smoke anymore. His favorite flavor is root beer barrel, it reminds him of when he was a child and finally broke his 60-year addiction to combustible cigarettes. He started smoking when he was 9 years old. We have flavored alcohol and flavored energy drinks, which children have died from. It seems a little crazy to the adult vaper that their elected representatives are trying to ban flavored nicotine products from adults who are dealing with a deadly addiction and seek harm reduction. Flavors keep our customers interested and involved in their recovery from their deadly smoking habit.
4. This industry has managed to reduce smoking rates without spending one dollar of taxpayer money. This industry is self-taught, possesses knowledge and technical skills to guide consumers through the journey of transitioning to a harm reduction product. They are also seeing customers week to week to advise and consult, which ensures successful transitions. How much taxpayer money has been dedicated to this goal over the last 20-30 years? Just think about that. It is disruptive technology and again, if we had an answer this effective to the opioid addiction or the alcohol problem in this country, how huge would that be? And would we try to ban it? Perhaps this industry should be getting a tax credit/subsidy instead of threatened with industry crushing taxes. We are not big tobacco.
5. In my community, local pediatricians send young parents who smoke to a vape shop. While smoking is banned in many public places, adults are smoking in cars and homes. Children are suffering 2nd and even 3rd hand smoke. Many people who live in apartments with multiple units are exposing others to 2nd and 3rd hand smoke through duct systems. Every adult who quits smoking in a community with flavored e-liquids is a reduction in the exposures to 2nd and 3rd hand smoke to children and other people. We should all want that. I have had both of these situations in my business.

In closing, I would like to make this committee aware that we are registered with the FDA. My registration was over 20,000 pages and both of my stores are visited by the FDA. Additionally, we filed a PMTA in September of 2021 including an additional 29 million pages. Additionally, I would like to encourage every single one of you to visit a vape shop, talk to vape shops in your district. Speak to people when you are out in your community and ask them questions. Most people are really happy to share because they are thrilled to finally be free from combustible tobacco. We can protect our children and allow adults to access to these life-saving products at the same time.

Respectfully,

Penny Walker

