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My name is Barry Margolis and I am the president and owner of Cooper-Booth Wholesale. I am the third generation to operate our family business which employs 284 people.

Cooper-Booth Wholesale Company is a distributor serving convenience store retailers in Maryland. We supply a variety of product categories to convenience stores the largest being tobacco items such as cigarettes, cigars, snuff and electronic cigarettes.

We oppose **SB177** (Flavored Tobacco Products - Prohibition) for a multitude of reasons:

1. This bill is not needed to protect youth now that the minimum age to purchase tobacco products is 21 years of age. All tobacco use including Underage tobacco usage rates are at record lows.
2. The purchase of flavored tobacco products such as menthol cigarettes and moist snuff is an adult choice for a legal consumer product.
3. Tobacco that is flavored with menthol is no more or less harmful than non-menthol flavored tobacco. While flavors have existed for years, tobacco use has continued to decline.
4. Flavored tobacco products intended for adults are no different than flavored alcoholic beverages that have existed for years.
5. Menthol represents 55% of cigarette sales and mint flavors represent 76% of moist snuff sales in Maryland. These bans could cost Maryland close to \$250 million in tax

revenue, reduce employment, and destroy the business of convenience stores across the state.

6. Our business, which supplies convenience stores will be devastated by a flavored tobacco ban. We will need to reduce employment to help offset the loss of sales.
7. Maryland consumers can easily go to other states to purchase the products they want.
8. Bans on Cigarettes and smokeless tobacco will create a large black market for the contraband product. Organized crime will profit from the prohibition of these products. We already see retailers buying tobacco products from unlicensed people selling out of the trunks of cars or white vans.
9. Studies show that 11% of cigarettes sold in Maryland were smuggled. The tax revenue loss currently is estimated to be \$45 million. Flavor bans will make the problem much worse.
10. Illegal sales will reverse the progress to reduce youth tobacco use since criminals don't check their customers for age.
11. SB177 will ultimately be harmful to the citizens of Maryland in terms of tax revenue declines, increased crime and reduced employment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry J. Margolis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Barry J. Margolis

President