

January 25, 2021

Maryland General Assembly and Senator J.B. Jennings  
90 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Maryland Lawmakers:

My name is Zain Nazir and I oversea multiple gas stations and convenience stores in the greater Baltimore area. Areas such as Joppa, Perry Hall, Baltimore City, Roland Park, and Westminster.

I urge you to oppose Senate Bill 177 to ban flavored tobacco products. This ban will cause a multitude of issues for our state.

Our Maryland businesses have been greatly affected and taken a major decline due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Signs of improvement in our businesses have been lacking and I do not forecast them improving in the immediate future. For small businesses, cigarettes are a major sale and revenue source. In addition to making a profit from menthol cigarettes, it is one of the key items drawing customers into our stores. They buy our products and we build community relationships with our customers. With the steady decline of sales, this ban would accelerate the nail in the coffin of our small businesses.

The benefit of living in a country like America is that we have a rich history where we can learn lessons from. Banning a certain product simply does not work in our culture. We must learn from times like the prohibition of alcohol and the demonization of marijuana. Those bans did not stop our society from using those products but on the contrary led to an increase in crime and illegal black markets. A ban on menthol tobacco will not stop users from smoking, it will only force them to buy their products from neighboring states or illegal sources. The recent ban of flavored vapes is a prime example. It is still quite easy to purchase disposable flavored vapes in our state, but unlike before customers are buying unregulated black market vapes. These vapes are more dangerous than before because the contents and manufacturing of these vapes is completely unknown.

At the end of the day, we are working middle class Americans. We have mortgages, bills, car payments, families, etc. Thus, this ban will cripple small businesses and ruin the relationships built within the community. We do not want to be in a position where we are forced to lay-off our employees. Instead of our law makers taking the easy rode by simply banning flavored tobacco, we should as a state be focused on education of the products and allow adults 21+ to make the decisions on what products they would like to purchase with their hard earned money. I appreciate your time into reading this letter and greatly appreciate your service to our state. I look forward to the positive changes you will make but urge you once again to oppose Senate Bill 177.

Sincerely,  
Zain Nazir

Carroll Mart  
910 Philadelphia Rd  
Joppa, MD 21085

Roland Park Exxon  
5425 Falls Rd  
Baltimore, MD

Save More  
4200 Wabash Ave  
Baltimore, MD 21215

Hot Spot Liquors  
3533 E Joppa Rd  
Parkville, MD