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My Name is Chris Warthen. I am currently the Assistant Manager of Operations for The George J Falter Co Located @ 3501 Benson Avenue, Baltimore Md 21227. We are the oldest candy distributor in the state of Maryland dating back to 1878. We have grown to carry a full line of convenience store items. I fear we won't be able to continue to provide a place of employment for the 160+ families who work for us unless we get some much-needed help at the State and Federal levels. Over the years The George J Falter Company has collected hundreds of millions of tax dollars for the State of Maryland. Since 2020 we have collected just under two hundred and thirty million dollars in tobacco tax, last year alone was almost eighty million dollars. All money that helps the State. Now we need the State to help us!

We have been the target of a multi county and multi state crime spree. Our trucks are being robbed at gun point! This is a public safety issue! We have been working with local authorities to try and catch the criminals and have had only one arrest and robberies are happening more and more. I reached out to the ATF agency and was told they don't handle Tobacco issues any longer since the TTB was formed in 2003. I reached out to the TTB and was told they don't have any agents like the ATF does.... So where do we turn for help???
We are being robbed at gun point almost weekly, targeting and taking cigarettes, mostly menthol. With the amount of Tax, the State of Maryland has put on cigarettes and DC no longer allowing the sale of Menthol Cigarettes, it has created a crime

spree that is destroying our company. Since July of last year 2022, we have lost a total of 2303 cartons to robberies.

\$238530.63 in cigarettes total state tax being \$79,747.50. We have police reports and videos to prove the cigarettes were stolen. We have exhausted the possibility of any more help from our insurance company leaving us in a negative - 174,152.34 . That 78,487.50 in state taxes we never collected from our customers and end users were never sold but stolen we should not have to bear this loss from the state. We need your help!

Currently we must bear the financial loss of the stolen cigarettes and the tax stamps that are on them. We pay for the Tax Stamps in advance and must take a loss for the stolen goods when State and local law enforcement can't provide safe streets for our trucks to travel on. How is this considered ok? This is completely unfair and needs to be changed immediately before it's too late to save our company for the families we employ.

We have stayed in business for over 140 years because, we believe the only way to run a business is the right way, Follow the laws that are put in place. Take care of your workplace and the people who you employ.

We need the proposed bill to change the law, that will refund the distributor the full amount of prepaid taxes on the stolen tobacco products.

I don't think I'm asking for anything outrageous, just what's fair. The cigarettes never made it to retail, and we should be completely refunded for the prepaid taxes.

Sincerely,

Chris Warthen

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