

2/21/2025

HB1441 – Opposed

Good afternoon,

My name is Kyle Vega. I am a small business owner in Maryland and have owned my two Vape locations for 11 years. Over that time frame, I have helped thousands of people within my community quit smoking traditional cigarettes. Even better, we have proudly lost customers because we helped them quit vaping and their nicotine addiction altogether. I am one of those people. I quit smoking cigarettes 11 years ago when I opened my stores. It has now been 4 years since I have used any nicotine product. All because of vaping. There is no way I would have been able to kick my nicotine addiction with prescription drugs, gums, or patches. I tried all of those options many times.

My short backstory brings me to the main point of this testimony. My strong opposition to HB1441. Why, you ask? Because it will eliminate the one product currently on the market that has helped me and all of my customers kick the deadly addiction to cigarettes. This bill is exactly what big tobacco companies want to pass. It will eliminate all vapor products from the Maryland market. Creating a monopoly that will only allow their products to be sold. The way that this bill is written is done so only to allow big tobacco products to survive. Why? Simply because there is no small vape company or wholesaler that can afford to pay the cost of or withstand the extensive guidelines to remain on the market. Do you know who can? Big tobacco.

This bill removes the consumer option to purchase the product they want and the product that has kept them away from cigarettes. It gives one person sole power over what can and cannot be sold within Maryland, that person is the Attorney General. How is it fair that one person gets a complete command of what your constituents can purchase? This will create a massive black market for Maryland consumers to get their products. Or they will go to our neighboring states to make their purchases. Leaving Maryland to lose significant tax dollars. An economic impact Maryland cannot afford at this time. Even worse, some will go back to smoking cigarettes. The nation's leading cause of death.

I strongly oppose this bill, as do all of my customers who may not have a voice in this fight. I am writing this testimony for them and my employees. I hope that you as well take a stand against big tobacco and decide to work on common sense reform rather than giving them the market on a silver platter.

Thank you,

Kyle Vega