

Dear Members of the Economic Matters Committee

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 1441. This bill primarily serves the interests of Big Tobacco, disguised as consumer protection. Its implications significantly threaten small businesses that are vital to our local economies while favoring large corporations.

The requirements outlined in HB 1441 are unattainable for small vape manufacturers. This will severely limit options for consumers, forcing them toward higher-nicotine products from major players in the industry, which may not align with their preferences. Only Big Tobacco can afford the costly compliance necessary under this law, effectively pushing innovative smaller businesses out of the market. As a result, we could see the near elimination of open-system vapor products and low-nicotine e-liquids in Maryland.

Consumers who currently use 3mg nicotine products may find themselves compelled to shift to 25-50mg tobacco products, buy from out-of-state retailers, or resort to potentially dangerous black market options. This bill does more than introduce a flavor ban; it represents a direct attack on small businesses, which could cost the state up to \$100 million annually based on conservative estimates from the previous flavor ban analysis.

Moreover, HB 1441 is even more restrictive than prior flavor legislation. It would further jeopardize small vape shops that comply with existing regulations and pay taxes, consolidating the market to Big Tobacco's control. As a result, vapor products will become limited to convenience stores, stripping consumers of their choices.

Banning these products will not eliminate their use; rather, it will create a significant black market that increases risks and complicates law enforcement efforts. This decline in legitimate businesses will lead to reduced sales tax and payroll tax revenue for the state.

To summarize, HB 1441 poses serious risks to small businesses, the economy, and public safety. I strongly urge you to reject this detrimental legislation in order to protect our local economy and the well-being of our communities. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Charles Gott