

2/21/2025

HB1441 – Opposed

Good afternoon,

My name is Victor Vega, and I'm a small business owner in Maryland, running two vape shops for the past 11 years. During that time, I've had the privilege of helping thousands of people in my community quit smoking traditional cigarettes. Even more gratifying is the fact that some of our customers no longer use vaping products either, having successfully kicked their nicotine addiction entirely. My customers wouldn't have been able to break free from my nicotine addiction using prescription medications, gums, or patches. I know this because 90% of my customers tell me on their first visit that they are attempting to quit after multiple attempts using the other methods listed above.

Now, I'll get to the crux of my message: my strong opposition to HB1441. This bill seeks to remove the one product that has helped me, and countless others, break free from the deadly addiction to cigarettes. This bill is exactly what big tobacco companies want. It would effectively eliminate all vapor products from the Maryland market, creating a monopoly that would only allow big tobacco products to be sold. The way this bill is structured benefits only large tobacco companies, as no small vape company or wholesaler could afford to comply with its stringent regulations. Guess who can? Big tobacco.

This bill strips away the consumer's right to choose the products they want — the products that have helped them move away from cigarettes. It places unchecked power in the hands of a single individual, the Attorney General, who will have the sole authority to decide what can and can't be sold in Maryland. How is it fair for one person to dictate what Maryland residents can buy? This will inevitably lead to a booming black market for vapor products, or worse, drive people to neighboring states to make their purchases, causing Maryland to lose out on valuable tax revenue. This is an economic hit that Maryland cannot afford right now. Even worse, some people may return to smoking cigarettes — the leading cause of death in the nation.

I wholeheartedly oppose this bill, and I hope in the end, you do as well. I hope you will stand up against the influence of big tobacco and advocate for common-sense reforms rather than giving them an unchecked monopoly over the market.

Thank you,

Victor Vega