

To the Members of the Maryland Economic Matters Committee,

I am writing to formally express my opposition to Bill HB 1441. While the bill aims to regulate tobacco and nicotine products within Maryland, its broad and unclear provisions pose significant unintended consequences that could harm both public health and the state's economy. Below are key concerns regarding this legislation:

1. Lack of Clarity and Selective Impact: HB 1441 leaves critical ambiguities in its regulation of nicotine and tobacco products, particularly regarding which products will remain available on the market. While the bill aims to target products that are harmful, it appears to prioritize large tobacco companies, which could result in a near-total exclusion of open system vapor products and low-nicotine devices. Without further clarification, the bill risks allowing the continued dominance of large corporations while unfairly excluding alternatives that have proven to be less harmful than traditional tobacco products.

2. The Risk of Product Bans and Public Health Consequences: One of the major concerns with HB 1441 is its potential to ban open-system vapor products, which are popular among many adult smokers trying to reduce their reliance on traditional cigarettes. These products provide a safer alternative for smokers, especially those who wish to quit. By restricting access to these products and low-nicotine devices, the bill could inadvertently remove harm reduction options from the market, potentially pushing individuals back to smoking cigarettes, which is counterproductive to public health objectives.

3. Negative Economic Impact: HB 1441 poses a severe economic threat to Maryland's small businesses within the vapor industry. Many local shops, manufacturers, and suppliers that specialize in open system vapor products and low-nicotine devices could face closures or significant reductions in revenue. This would result in widespread job losses and a decline in local economic activity. Additionally, this bill would reduce the state's tax revenue, as it would reduce the sales of these products while also forcing many businesses to either shut down or relocate to more business-friendly states.

4. Emergence of a Black Market: If passed, HB 1441 will likely drive consumers to seek out these products through unregulated black markets or out-of-state purchases. Many consumers may resort to online services or purchase from states with less restrictive regulations, undermining Maryland's ability to regulate and ensure the safety of these products. This shift would reduce the ability of the state to track and manage product safety and compliance, further compromising public health.

Conclusion: Considering these concerns, I urge the Maryland Economic Matters Committee to reconsider the potential consequences of HB 1441. Instead of imposing broad restrictions that harm small businesses, restrict consumer choice, and push products into unregulated markets, the committee should focus on a more balanced approach that promotes consumer safety without stifling innovation or economic growth.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I trust that you will take these points into account as you evaluate this important legislation.

Sincerely,
Dominic Hopkins