

Opposition to SB 0918: Protecting Small Businesses, Health, and Consumer Choice

Good Afternoon,

I strongly oppose SB 0918 because it threatens small businesses, limits consumer choices, and could hurt public health. While it's being sold as a way to protect consumers, this bill ultimately benefits Big Tobacco at the expense of local businesses and individual choice—something that personally affects me.

Vaping saved my life. I was a long-time smoker, and nothing helped me quit—until I discovered vaping. The ability to choose different nicotine levels and a variety of flavors gave me the flexibility to gradually reduce my nicotine intake and, over time, completely quit smoking. These options allowed me to find what worked for me, helping me to get healthier and breathe easier. I am living proof that vaping can help people move away from harmful cigarettes.

However, SB 0918 could take that choice away from people like me. Here's why I believe this bill is a step backward:

- 1. Big Tobacco Wins, Small Businesses Lose**

SB 0918 is heavily backed by Big Tobacco, and it risks pushing small, independent companies out of the market. The higher costs and complicated rules could make it impossible for smaller businesses to stay afloat, leaving only big tobacco corporations with the resources to survive. That means fewer choices for consumers like me who want safer alternatives to smoking. It's not just about protecting the big guys, it's about taking away options that have genuinely helped many of us.

- 2. Too Much Power in One Place**

The bill gives the Attorney General the sole power to decide which vapor products can be sold in Maryland, but with no clear rules on how those decisions will be made. This opens the door to arbitrary decision-making, making it harder for small business owners to predict what's coming next. I've seen how hard small vape shops work to provide quality products for people like me, and this bill risks taking that away, leaving us with fewer options—and likely, only what Big Tobacco wants to sell.

- 3. Unclear and Unfair Regulations**

With no clear process in place, businesses won't know what to expect, and that's not fair. If it's hard for smaller companies to comply with the bill fees and regulations, they'll be forced to shut down, leaving big corporations dominating the market. The lack of clarity means we'll be left with fewer products to choose from, and for someone like me who found success with vaping, that's a huge setback. Losing these options means I could lose the ability to choose the right product to maintain my health improvements.

- 4. Risk of Losing Favorite Products**

One of my biggest concerns with SB 0918 is that it could ban open-system

vapor products and low-nicotine options. For people like me who use low-nicotine products (like 3mg), this could leave us with only higher-nicotine options (such as 50mg), or worse, push us back to traditional cigarettes. The ability to choose the nicotine level that worked for me was key to successfully quitting smoking, and this bill could take that away. This isn't just about convenience; it's about my health and the health of so many others who rely on these products to stay away from smoking.

5. **Economic Damage to Maryland**

If small vape shops close, it won't just hurt consumers like me—it will hurt the Maryland economy. With more convenience stores being the only retailers left, data shows they are more likely to sell to teens. The potential economic loss to the state could be over \$100 million, and even more concerning, a black market for these products could emerge as people turn to online sources or neighboring states to get the products they need.

Vaping changed my life for the better. It helped me quit smoking, improved my health, and gave me the ability to choose from a range of flavors and products that fit my needs. I worry that SB 0918 will take that choice away from people who are trying to improve their health and will hurt the small businesses that offer these alternatives. I urge lawmakers to reconsider this bill and focus on solutions that protect consumer choice, support small businesses, and help people like me live healthier, smoke-free lives.

Respectfully,

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