

Jenna Anthony
Regarding Finance Committee Bill SB0918
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My name is Jenna Anthony. I am a resident and business owner in Maryland. I am testifying about the negative impacts that SB0918 will have on my business, employees, and customers if passed as currently written. I find the bill unfavorable.

As an owner of a small vape shop who focuses solely on selling nicotine products and holds a vape shop vendor license, I am concerned that this bill favors big tobacco and is being submitted under the pretense of consumer protection. However, there is a high risk that this bill will ban lower nicotine vaping products (0mg-12mg nicotine) that are being used by consumers and many other Maryland residents to slowly decrease their nicotine intake. If only closed systems, like disposable devices (50mg or more nicotine) are left on the market, consumers will no longer be able to select their preferred nicotine level.

This bill is also likely to lead to the closure of small businesses like mine, who focus solely on selling nicotine vaping products. We hold a vape shop vendor license, meaning at least 70% of our sales are from vaping products made for nicotine. We are a specialized business that age-gates entry to our store to only those who are 21 years and older as do most others with a vape shop vendor license. We use ID scanners to check everyone's ID that enters and makes a purchase. We are diligent about keeping vaping products out of the hands of teenagers and children. This is not the case for convenience stores and smoke shops that hold only an OTP license. Anyone can enter these stores and they are the main offenders of sales to people under 21. With the passage of this bill and the closure of vape shop vendors, these offenders will be the ones left with the sales of nicotine vaping products.

Shops that hold a vape shop vendor license also create a lot of revenue for the state through the 20% vaping sales tax. The closure of these shops would have a devastating economical impact on the state. The state has also been made aware of many shops that only hold an OTP license without the vape shop vendor license not charging or remitting the proper vape tax to the state. This bill will punish the good faith businesses and reward the businesses that are not following the laws. My employees and employees of these many vape shop vendors will no longer have jobs and will likely have to rely on unemployment if this bill is passed.

In addition, as history has taught us, banning sales of products that consumers want often causes a black market, which is highly likely in Maryland where you can enter several other states with a short car ride. Black Market means NO regulation of these products, which we can agree is not ideal.

This bill lacks a clear process on how the Attorney General of Maryland, who will have sole authority, will determine what products can and cannot be sold. This will likely leave only vaping products produced by big tobacco on the market because they are the ones with unlimited financial funds to meet the proposed requirements.

Let's keep lower nicotine products on the market and vaping product sales in the hands of vape shop vendors that obey the laws, truly care about their customers, and keeping vaping products out of the hands of children and teens. Vape shop vendors are not opposed to regulation, but are opposed to the bill as written due to lack

of clarity, bias for the tobacco industry, risk of bans on lower nicotine products, and the economic impact it will have.

I would like to thank the committee for taking the time to read my testimony and for your considerations of my concerns regarding SB0198.