

Hello all, my name is Ashleigh Lagreco, and I want to talk about some key points about why I am unfavorable to SB0918.

Big Tobacco aims to make our communities sick by putting hundreds of chemicals in their products. According to the CDC in 2024 (reference link(s) at the bottom), Big Tobacco targets the majority of low-income communities simply because they know where money is tight, and stress levels are high by taking advantage of these low-income communities.

I do not agree with the attorney general having any input on what the American people are allowed to be sold in the vaping industry because it can safely be assumed that unless you are trained in the vaping industry, you really wouldn't understand any of it as an outsider while continuing to refuse to be receptive to all of the available information seeing as companies like big tobacco line your pockets because they are intimidated by the vaping industry as we provide safer and cleaner alternatives that aren't pumped full of chemicals cigarette companies pack in their products.

Money is extremely tight in this economy right now. The least we can do for our communities is provide low-cost, safer alternatives that aren't filled with chemicals at a skyrocketed price. Not to mention, this is a severe overreach that could potentially cause adverse health effects to the people you all are supposed to be protecting. While our attorney general may know the legal department, I have serious reservations about them having any knowledge of the vaping industry regarding costs and fees for our products. Being in the vape industry has taught me so much over the last 5 years, one of the biggest things being that ONLY providing high doses of nicotine to our communities raises the risk of cardiovascular disease (The link regarding heart disease rates is below), which is already the #1 killer in the US according to the CDC at the end of 2023. implementing 50mg of nicotine as the only option, in my opinion, would significantly increase this. (Heart disease deaths in the US, according to the CDC, is at 702,880) Providing lower nicotine options for our community helps reduce these risks in the long run.

The cost of living in this economy right now is skyrocketing, it's not fair to take it out on communities, especially when big tobacco is well known for mostly marketing to any low/middle-income people of SES in the US. As a trained professional in the vaping industry, it is my opinion that the attorney general lacks the expertise to be able to regulate these kinds of things in our industry so that big tobacco stomps everyone else out and takes away hundreds of jobs from small businesses that thrive over taking care of our communities by keeping costs as low as we possibly can and providing vape products that aim to be better and safer for the people. Small vape shops offer knowledge and expertise for the people who need the information, and being easily accessible for any issues with their products, in turn, helps keep the community safe.

75% of my customer base uses a low mg nicotine in their open system devices because they have worked so relentlessly hard to cut back on the amount of nicotine they were using from smoking cigarettes previously. The whole purpose of vaping is to provide our community with safer alternatives than smoking cigarettes. It is a well-known fact that smoking cigarettes is the leading cause of chronic bronchitis. Cigarette smoke is also known to cause inflammation of the airways in your lungs and low immune function. (Reference link below)

The biggest complaint I see my customers come in with when they shop for their vapes at liquor/convenience stores is simple: when they buy a product there, the seller knows nothing about that product or how to fix the issues that they have when and if they arise, on multiple accounts, whereas if purchased here we are trained to know how to troubleshoot their problems to prevent further issue. I have had people come to me with a device they bought from a liquor store, and they had walked out of the store, and the vape stopped working they go back in to have it fixed/replaced, and they are told no, which makes them turn to places like the huge black market because they lose trust in stores when things like this happen, not to mention this puts small businesses out of business which goes against directly against the business forward directive set in Maryland.

Reference links:

(1) "Unfair and Unjust Practices and Conditions Harm People with Low Socioeconomic Status and Drive Health Disparities." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/tobacco-health-equity/collection/low-ses-unfair-and-unjust.html#:~:text=The tobacco industry targets low, can make health problems worse. Accessed 21 Feb. 2025.

(2) *NCHS Data Brief, Number 492, December 2023*, www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db492-tables.pdf. Accessed 21 Feb. 2025.

(3) "Chronic Bronchitis." *Ucsfhealth.Org*, www.ucsfhealth.org/conditions/chronic-bronchitis#:~:text=Cigarette smoking is the number, COPD, such as chronic bronchitis. Accessed 21 Feb. 2025.