



April 3, 2026

Chair Wells, Vice Chair Kerr, and Members of the GLE Committee,

My name is Finnie Helmuth. Since 2000, I have served as president of the Premium Cigar Retailers Association of Maryland (PCRAM). Our association represents approximately 35 brick-and-mortar, family-owned premium cigar retailers across Maryland. One of which is my business, The Humidour Cigar Shoppe, located in Cockeysville, MD. On behalf of the association and my own family-owned business, I support SB 623.

It is extremely difficult to operate as a small retailer in the State right now. For many of us, these businesses are not just storefronts; they are our livelihoods, our families, and something we have spent years building. My own business has been operating for over 29 years, and any opportunity for growth goes directly back into my staff and my family. These are people who rely on us being open and stable.

I appreciate the time and effort that has gone into this bill, especially the stakeholder discussions and the workgroup's recommendations. The association appreciates the dedication of the legislature, and we seek to move forward in the application of all compliance measures to ensure the longevity of our businesses. SB 623 strikes a meaningful balance, and we are prepared to operate within the safeguards that are in place.

What we are really asking for is stability and a clear path forward. Uncertainty is what hurts small businesses like mine the most. We want to keep doing what we've been doing responsibly, serve our customers, keep our employees working, and stay competitive without worrying that the rules will suddenly shift in a way that we can't recover from.

The intention of this bill clearly keeps business here in Maryland. These are local, family-run operations, and therefore, money stays in our communities. We serve an adult customer base, and we take that responsibility seriously. Per previously shared written testimony from the PCRAM, the average age of an individual's first premium cigar is 30 years old. We simply seek to maintain our business ventures and our predictable consumer market moving forward.

We are asking for the ability to continue operating, to grow in a measured way, and to keep our doors open.

For those reasons, I respectfully support Senate Bill 623 and encourage its passage.
We appreciate your consideration.
Finnie Pecunes Helmuth