

Vermont House Committee on Ways and Means

Subject: Opposition to Senate Bill 18 - Ban on Flavored Tobacco

Dear Members of the Vermont House Committee on Ways and Means,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 18, which proposes a ban on flavored e-vapor, moist snuff tobacco (MST), alternative nicotine products, and menthol cigarettes. While I understand the concerns surrounding these products, I believe that a ban is not the most effective solution to address the issue at hand.

Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that adult consumers have the right to make informed choices about the products they use. By implementing a ban on flavored e-vapor, MST, alternative nicotine products, and menthol cigarettes, Senate Bill 18 would limit the choices available to adults who may rely on these products as alternatives to traditional tobacco products. It is crucial to consider harm reduction strategies that allow adults to make informed decisions about their health and well-being. Many items considered have zero impact on underage smoking. For example cherry flavored pipe tobacco and cigars.

Furthermore, a ban on these products may have unintended consequences. Prohibition has historically shown that it can lead to the growth of illicit markets, where unregulated and potentially dangerous products can flourish. By pushing these products into the black market, we risk exposing consumers to even greater health risks and undermining public safety efforts. Massachusetts is the posterchild of what not to do. The initial year of the ban they lost an estimated \$129 million dollars in tax revenue alone. A black market was established and now costs Massachusetts tax payers more than \$1 million dollars to fund the MA DOR Illegal Taskforce. But the black market is what is gaining headlines – found on the MA DOR Illegal Taskforce website <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/dor-illegal-tobacco-task-force>. You can avoid this calamity. It is essential to prioritize evidence-based policies that strike a balance between public health concerns and individual freedoms.

Instead of a blanket ban, I urge the committee to consider alternative approaches to address the concerns associated with flavored e-vapor, MST, alternative nicotine products, and menthol cigarettes. Education and awareness campaigns and eliminating online sales of tobacco products can be effective tools in reducing youth access and consumption. By focusing on prevention and eliminating online sales, we can achieve a more comprehensive and sustainable solution. VT retailers have a 98% compliance rate. The under age smokers are not getting the products from VT retailer.

In conclusion, I respectfully request that you reconsider Senate Bill 18 and explore alternative strategies to address the concerns surrounding flavored e-vapor, MST, alternative nicotine products, and menthol cigarettes. It is crucial to strike a balance between public health objectives and individual freedoms, ensuring that adults have access to a range of harm reduction options while protecting our youth from the potential risks associated with these products.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I trust that you will carefully evaluate the potential consequences of Senate Bill 18 and make a decision that reflects the best interests of the citizens of Vermont.

Thank you for your consideration,

Casey Harrington

Beverage Baron

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