

Hello my name is George Burnes and I am the owner of Capital Candy Co Inc of Barre. I appreciate the opportunity to present this written testimony and am disappointed that it could not be done in person. Apparently there was not time to fit me in. Capital was started in 1938 by my grandfather who sold two Candy items out of the back seat of his car. Since our inception we have paid to the State of Vermont over 500 million dollars in taxes consisting of tobacco, payroll, sales, fuel and lately the States new health insurance. We employ around 170 people and donate much to the various community functions and charities. In my 50 years of running the business I have never testified about anything. I think over the years the legislature has done mostly a good job under difficult circumstances. However I am starting to feel like a pin cushion.

A law very similar to the proposed S-18 passed a couple of years ago in Massachusetts . The results of that are that NH border stores are selling hundreds of millions of dollars in menthol cigarettes , flavored cigars and vapes. In addition the criminal black market is selling hundreds of millions more. The same would happen to Vermont

In 1998 all states including Vermont signed on to the tobacco master settlement. The initial amount agreed upon to the states was 246 billion dollars split up over several years. It is still on going and has been added to over the years. Vermont's share is very large. This money was supposed to be spent for youth education , smoking cessation programs and other health related issues.

The laws governing tobacco and vape product in Vermont are the same as they are for alcohol and marijuana. A person needs to be 21 with an ID that is checked or scanned to verify age. The state has training programs for store employees to help them verify age and also perform “stings” which help keep stores accountable. It is a very successful process and should be applied equally.

Alcohol has many flavored products including all the new flavored beers and now there are flavored “nips” with a higher alcohol content that are on the counters in retail stores. Liquor which the state sells comes in many flavors . Marijuana comes in many flavors, strengths, sizes ,brownies, gummies etc. S-18 does not ban any of these products.

Again my name is George Burnes. Education not legislation is the answer.