

Haidar Arar

[328 Marlboro Road](#)

[Brattleboro, VT 05301](#)

[Vermont](#) House Committee on Ways and Means

Subject: Opposition to Senate Bill 18 - Full Flavor Ban on Tobacco and Nicotine Products

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

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 18, which proposes a full flavor ban on tobacco and nicotine products in Vermont. I own and operate a store in Brattleboro right across the Connecticut River to New Hampshire. This ban will undoubtedly shift my customers that purchase these products as well as everything else they buy in my store. I am afraid if Senate Bill 18 passes, as written, it will put me out of business entirely. While I understand the intention behind this bill, I believe it would have several negative consequences for our state, including lost revenue, increased enforcement costs, and a detrimental impact on flood relief efforts.

It is worth noting that Vermont already has stringent regulations in place regarding the sale and use of tobacco and nicotine products. The legal age to purchase these products is set at 21, ensuring that they are not accessible to minors and retail compliance is greater than 90%. This existing legislation effectively addresses concerns related to youth access and usage. Implementing a full flavor ban would be redundant and place an unnecessary burden on law-abiding citizens and businesses.

I would like to draw your attention to the experience of our other neighboring state, Massachusetts, which implemented a similar flavor ban. The unintended consequence of this ban cost the state \$127 million loss in tax revenue as consumers turned to the black market or neighboring states to purchase their preferred tobacco and nicotine products. Vermont, being a smaller state, is likely to face a similar scenario, resulting in a decline in tax revenue that could have been used for essential public services.

Furthermore, the enforcement of a full flavor ban would require additional resources and manpower, which would inevitably come at a cost to the state.

Massachusetts enforcement costs total more than \$1 million dollars. These funds could be better allocated towards other pressing issues, such as education, healthcare, or infrastructure development. It is crucial to consider the economic impact of such a ban, especially in light of the ongoing flood relief efforts that require substantial financial support.

According to recent estimates, a full flavor ban in Vermont would cost our residents an estimated \$15.6 million in tax revenue alone. This significant financial burden could be better utilized to support flood relief efforts, which are of utmost importance to our communities. Redirecting these funds towards rebuilding and recovery would have a far more positive and immediate impact on the lives of Vermonters.

In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider Senate Bill 18 and its proposed full flavor ban on tobacco and nicotine products. The potential loss of revenue, increased enforcement costs, and diversion of funds from flood relief efforts make this bill counterproductive and detrimental to the well-being of our state. I implore you to prioritize the needs of Vermonters and focus on more effective and targeted measures to address any concerns related to tobacco and nicotine usage.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Haidar Arar