

March 15, 2016



Dear Committee Members,

We are writing today in opposition to a proposed amendment that would dramatically increase the cost for manufacturers of vapor products who wish to sell them in Vermont.

In the last five years millions of former smokers have turned to vaping products as an alternative to combusted cigarettes and the resulting growth for our industry has been significant. The Smoke-Free Alternatives Trade Association (SFATA) is the largest vapor business trade association in the U.S., representing over 850 independently owned businesses within the industry.

Smoking rates continue to drop nationwide as increasing numbers of smokers choose vapor products. We strongly believe these products are improving the lives of thousands of families and a growing number of studies and personal stories support this. Last fall, Public Health England reviewed dozens of studies regarding the concerns and benefits of vapor products and subsequently released a groundbreaking report stating vapor products are at least 95% safer than combustible cigarettes. Many publicly funded smoking cessation agencies in England are now actively recommending vapor products to smokers looking to quit and are reporting great success.

As drafted, this amendment would shut down all vapor-focused businesses in the state and likely eliminate nearly all vaping options for your constituents who are seeking an alternative to smoking. By imposing a \$1,000 PER PRODUCT fee on manufacturers wishing to sell their products in Vermont, you will limit the options of consumers to only those manufactured by Big Tobacco companies. A given store can easily have over 300 separate products on their shelves at any point. This amendment would require \$300,000 in licensing fees be paid by manufacturers just to cover the products sold in one store. Erecting such massive barriers to products that many are choosing over smoking is not sound policy.

We urge you to oppose any legislation that will create such a devastating financial burden on the small businesses in Vermont selling these successful alternatives to smoking. This language will result in business closures, loss of employment, and ironically, also give a virtual monopoly to Big Tobacco companies within the state of Vermont.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cabrera', is located below the 'Sincerely,' text.

Cynthia Cabrera
Executive Director – SFATA