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From: Tiffany De Bona <tokenglass1@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 26, 2020 9:24 PM

To: Faith Brown <FBrown@leg.state.vt.us>

Subject: [External] Flavor Ban

[External]

I am writing to you today to express my concerns pertaining to the flavor ban being discussed. I am the part time manager of a store that sells these products. I am also a former 34 year smoker.

The vape tax and age 21 laws enacted last year severely effected the business that I work for. I'm not sure if the 18 to 20 year old crowd gave up consuming cannabis or just get their products online. It's hard to tell as they do not come into the store. Occasionally we do see former adult customers that go to New Hampshire or online to source their vaping supplies, all tax free.(Even with the law, products are still being shipped to Vermont.) Out of the Vermont youth that were surveyed that actually use vapor products only 10% of them use a vape or tried one cited flavor as the reason. Curiosity was the main reason according to the CDC data. As you know the law is 21 and over now. Less then 2 percent, I dare say 1 percent of the product that is sold is non flavored or tobacco flavored to legal adults. 98% is clearly flavor based. I quit smoking using a grape flavored vape. My one year anniversary is approaching this September, not one cheat!! I actually do feel better! I had tried the traditional methods only to not have them work for me. Without the accessibility to flavors I do fear I would be tempted to snag a pack of cigarettes before I had the opportunity to purchase illegal products. And there will be illegal products.

Massachusetts recently implemented an all out flavor ban. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue's Illegal Tobacco Task Force as well as ATF agents predict that the already existing 10 billion dollar illicit market will grow larger with imported vapor products as well as clones. It is already happening. Clones are directly imported from foreign countries, have no traceable lineage and no quality control. It looks like the real thing but it isn't. These products can be ordered off of Alibaba etc, without age verification and for pennies on the dollar compared to a traditional wholesaler. There is also no tax that gets applied or age verification taking place as the products saturate the illicit market.

As a retailer we have not had any bulk sales of vapor products, have been diligent in carding and have paid every vape tax that is due. This bill would only hurt the shops and businesses of Vermont that are already doing what has been asked if them, while doing nothing to contain the illicit market. In other states that have implemented flavor bans the smoking rates are slowly ticking upwards. This law will drive people back to smoking or looking for other ways to purchase products. Like it or not even via legislation flavored products will not cease to exist. They will be everywhere, just less safe and unavailable from a trusted retailer. We have seen this first hand after the implementation of T21 and the 92% tax.

Vermont businesses are struggling throughout the state. People are struggling throughout the state. Now is not the time to enact legislation that would devastate small business and force former smokers into the illicit markets or back to combustible tobacco. I implore you to do your own research. Vaping is up to 95% less harmful than smoking, adults like flavors and unsafe black markets currently exist.

As well meaning as this law is it will not achieve the desired results. Products that are meant for adults should only be sold in adult only stores.

Sincerely, Tiffany

Token Glass

Sent from my iPhone