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Sent: Friday, January 24, 2020 2:39 PM
To: Doris Oatley <DOatley@leg.state.vt.us>
Subject: [External] Bill S.288 Discussion

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Hello,

My name is Ali Desautels and I work at Garcia's Tobacco Shop in downtown Burlington. We sell a large variety of nicotine related products in our store and regularly interact with the consumers. Because of this, we hear opinions and feedback related to tobacco news on a daily basis. I believe my coworkers and I are a great resource in regards to the potential effects of the recently proposed bill to ban flavored nicotine products. One thing is very clear to us: This type of ban would push responsible adults back towards cigarettes and other more harmful alternatives. The 92% tax has already accomplished this, a flavor ban would only push more people in that direction.

We understand that the bill has been proposed in hopes to reduce and prevent teenage/kid tobacco use. We agree that this needs to be addressed and is an important topic. However, we recently raised the smoking age to 21 in hopes to address this. It's too soon to tell right now, but we believe this will be a huge step in preventing youth access. We should at least wait and analyze the effect of the 21+ law before making decisions that would potentially shut down businesses, push people back towards cigarettes, and encourage a black market.

"This bill proposes to ban the sale or possession of flavored cigarettes, flavored e-cigarettes, and flavored substances that contain nicotine or are otherwise intended for use with an e-cigarette." (From the introduced bill S.288)

If this bill is passed, all flavored cigars, any flavored snus and chewing tobacco, menthol cigarettes, flavored e-liquid and more would be removed from shelves immediately.

After speaking to many customers, we fear that a flavor ban would adversely affect adults who have used flavors in e-liquids and alternative products to quit smoking. Many customers have admitted they would most likely go back to smoking cigarettes. This ban includes flavored snus and flavored nicotine pouches. The FDA just granted the first ever modified risk orders for these smokeless options. The most popular modified risk snus is flavored. If this option disappears, users will most likely go back to cigarettes. I've personally witnessed countless customers who have been able to quit cigarettes using flavored e-liquid and then quit nicotine by weaning the nicotine concentration all the way down to zero in these e-liquids.

Instead of a flavor ban, legislators should be focused on the strength of e-liquids available. In other countries, such as the UK, a limit on the strength of liquid has been set. They capped the strength at 2%. In the US there is no cap. We have seen options as high as 6%. This is about 3 times the strength of an average cigarette. This strength creates a high feeling. This is most likely the cause of kids getting hooked. Many scientists and health professionals have spoken up and are saying that vaping is less

harmful than smoking. In an article from the Wall Street Journal from October 2019 states “The organizations that have signed a statement saying that vaping is significantly less harmful than smoking include Public Health England, the Association of Directors of Public Health, the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal Society for Public Health.” Instead of banning all flavored products we need to regulate them. Put a cap on the nicotine strength. If we want to reduce medical costs involved and caused by smoking in the future we need to supply and encourage options that are less harmful, not push people away from them.

If we can successfully regulate flavored alcohol options that are arguably targeted to kids just as often and in similar ways that flavored nicotine is, we should be able to regulate these flavor options in the tobacco industry.

I believe the intention of this bill is positive and in favor of public health. However, many parts of it need to be readdressed if we want to see any positive results in our community. The conversation should not be about flavors, it needs to be about strength and the concentration of nicotine in vape and alternative products if we really care about the health of our community.

Thank you for your time,

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