

February 1, 2021

Co-Chair Mary Daugherty Abrams

Co-Chair Jonathan Steinberg

Senator Heather Somers

Senator Tony Hwang

Representative William Petit

Members of the Public Health Committee:

I am submitting testimony in opposition to S.B. 326, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF FLAVORED CIGARETTES, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS.

As a local business and responsible retailer of age restricted products like cigarettes, tobacco and nicotine delivery systems, I am opposed to this bill because our customers who are of legal age should be able to choose from a wide variety of products that suit their taste.

A ban on these products would lower local legal sales of them, and create a new illegal market that would supply consumers with products smuggled from other states. According to a Wall Street Journal article published on January 29, 2021 titled *American Smokers Quit Trying to Quit* a Food and Drug Administration (FDA) spokeswoman said “changes in tobacco consumption couldn’t be attributed to a single policy, event or piece of legislation.” Therefore, banning flavors will not result in lower use of tobacco and nicotine.

According to the Store Tracking Analytical Reporting System (STARS), FY 2020, flavored tobacco products are the choice of many adult consumers. STARS reports that in Connecticut, 41.3% of cigarettes are menthol. Banning flavors only takes away a popular product that adults choose to purchase. Enforcing a minimum age of 21 is key to continuing the fight to reduce underage use of these products, and as a business on the front line we ensure that minors do not have access to them.

Mackinac Center for Public Policy found that Connecticut has an immense illegal market. Today more than 1 in 4 of all cigarettes consumed in our state are smuggled here draining more than \$130 million in tax revenues.

As a local business allowing us to continue to sell these products is the best protection against under age use of tobacco and collection of the taxes that come with these products. Banning flavors will only drive smokers to sources other than legitimate businesses like ours.

Please oppose S.B. 326, AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF FLAVORED CIGARETTES, TOBACCO PRODUCTS, ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS and support consumer choice and local retailers.

Sincerely,