

Respected Public Health Committee,

My name is Marvi Ayaz, and I own a business in the city of Groton, it is a convenient store and a gas station. It is located on 399 Benham Road, Groton CT.

I am not here to talk about the loss of revenue for the state of CT and the loss of revenue in the city of Groton. Nor will I talk about the loss of revenue for my business which will force me to lay off my employees to reduce my expenses because of this ban. What I am here to talk to you about is the health of others which is YOUR concern as well.

The main question that arises is Will this restriction have less smokers than what we have now or will this increase the amount of smokers?

These illicit sales will be occurring with certain targeted people which most likely will be our children in the corners of schools rather than the adults who can legally purchase these. I saw this happen with marijuana and now I will see this with menthol cigarettes. To have this remain legal with a system in place to control the customer base is going to curb illegal transactions. This can do the same thing, but more importantly prevent flavored tobacco from being an illegal, uncontrolled gateway drug for our children.

Some states have legalized marijuana, are the users of marijuana increased or decreased or the same? Legalizing marijuana created more revenue for those states.

This ban will result in cigarettes coming from other states that have fewer taxes than Connecticut. Therefore, this will increase single cigarettes being sold, commonly known as Loosie. As a result, kids will have more of an incentive to smoke because of the affordability.

Not only is this ban affecting our children but this ban will not be beneficial for the entire society. This will result in an increase in young smokers. Sellers will not be licensed dealers nor will they be following any state regulations. Thus, this will be tax-free money which will create more problems in society leading to more issues in public health. Rather, we should collect money in the form of excise tax and sales tax. We can utilize this money to have public awareness programs that explain the consequences of smoking. Also just an FYI I would like to add that according to Connecticut Tobacco Revenue, the state spending on tobacco prevention is 0.0 million. I would like to conclude with my final point:

I have my masters in forensic science and I came across an article from Medpage stating "Researchers have discovered a genetic variant exclusively in individuals of African descent that they say significantly increase preferences for smoking menthol". "African Americans with the variant of the MRGPRX4 gene were 5 to 8 times more likely to smoke menthol cigarettes compared to those without it. This study was performed by Dr. Denise Drayna who is a MD and Phd of national institute on deafness". As a result, african americans or anyone who wants flavored cigarettes will have to go to other states or buy illegally from a black marketeer. When there's a demand, one will always find a way to buy it.

Respected Public Health Committee, I thank you for your time.

Marvi Ayaz