

February 1, 2021

To: Co-Chair Senator Mary Daugherty Abrams, Co-Chair Jonathan Steinberg and all members of the Public Health Committee.

Re: Raised Bill 326 An Act Prohibiting The Sale of Flavored Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems and Vapor Products.

I am writing to you as a small business owner in Connecticut not in favor of the implications pertaining to the prohibition of all flavored and menthol products to anyone 21 years of age or older. I strongly feel Connecticut has already moved in the right direction increasing the age to purchase all tobacco related products, including e cigarettes and other vape products from 18 to 21 years old. And, I applaud our legislators for making this change to deter underage purchases.

However, I strongly feel banning of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes (which the majority of my sales are older adults) may not produce the results the Committee is looking to achieve for the following reasons:

1. An overall negative impact to the State's revenue of sales of these products to adults, as well as loss revenue from licensing fees.
2. Prohibition may increase an illegal market place and shift revenues from licensed business to unlicensed individuals that maybe selling products more harmful to the mainstream public and underage individuals.
3. Customers will more than likely travel to bordering states (RI, NY, New Hampshire and in some cases southern states) to purchase these products, as Massachusetts has encountered since its prohibition in June 2020.

It is known that behaviors such as smoking cigarettes, vaping, drinking alcohol, etc. may be considered an addictive behavior. In terms of trying to stop certain “negative” behaviors, where do we stop legislating? Should the Connecticut Legislature also look into the prohibition of cannabis sales, as well as all gambling within our state closing our casinos and halting all sales of our Connecticut lottery system?

Before making a law to prohibit the sale of flavored cigarettes, tobacco products, e-cigs and other vape products, the Public Health Committee should reconsider and view what Massachusetts has lost in revenue since the prohibition became effective.

Thank you taking time to read my written testimony.

Scott Soucey