Aldin Associates Limited Partnership & Savin Brands
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Connecticut Public Health Committee
Co-Chairs Mary Daugherty Abrams, Jonathan Steinberg
Senators Heather Somers, Tony Hwang
Representative William Petit

Written Testimony regarding SB 326

February 1, 2021

Public Health Committee Members,

Aldin Associates & Savin Brands are privately owned companies with common ownership. The owners, David and Robert Savin, are born and bred in Connecticut. We employ over 200 Connecticut citizens. We operate convenience stores and Moe's Southwest Grill restaurants. To say we have been negatively affected by the Coronavirus is an understatement. We have worked hard and have been diligent in keeping our employees safe while servicing the citizens of the state with necessary products. My mantra throughout the pandemic has been I want to keep everybody working and earning – I want everyone safe. We also supply 42 independent retail stores in Connecticut with fuel.

I am writing to request you do not proceed with the ban on flavored tobacco products in SB 326. I am sure you have received the data on menthol cigarette sales and the impact the ban will have on business and jobs, crime and law enforcement, and the financial impact to the state by losing tax revenue.

We, along with the retailers we supply, responsibly sell age restricted products. We utilize a service called BARS which mystery shops to assure we do not sell age restricted product. Our customers, that legally can purchase the age restricted products, should be able the choice of purchasing the products they prefer. Consumers that have developed a preference for a particular product will find a way to satisfy their appetite when the product is not available – this means they will purchase products from other states or will purchase the products illegally. When that occurs it harms the state, the retailers, the retailer's employees, and the retailer's other customers.

How does it harm the employees of the retailers and their other customers? Retailer's have made an investment in their business – they either purchased the business or paid for building the business. Obviously, retailers have expenses they must pay to stay in business; labor, the products they purchase to sell, taxes (property, labor, etc.), utilities, insurance, credit card surcharges, maintenance, supplies, etc. When the business loses an income stream (menthol cigarettes are 41.3% of cigarette sales in CT) they need to make up the loss somehow to stay viable and in business. Some retailers will make up the loss by cutting labor – therefore their employees are harmed financially. Some retailers look to make up the loss by raising prices on other items which, obviously, harms consumers.

Ultimately the retailer is trying to stay in business, to somehow make a return on their investment. They made the investment with an understanding of the business – such as the products they rely on selling to make revenue to pay for the investment and the expenses listed above. When the product is eliminated the loss of revenue must be made up somewhere. In extreme cases, businesses that do not adjust do not survive. There may be some that think that statement is exaggerated but it does happen. When a business closes, it harms the proprietor, the employees, the consumers that rely on the business, the state, etc.

Please oppose SB 326. Please do not harm businesses that have already been harmed.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Ronald H. Tateosian
Chief Operating Officer