

To:

Honorable members of the Committee:

I am, Saquib Zamir, writing to you on behalf of our businesses and employees, of which there are 12 including myself. We are a group of 5 Smoke shops in Fairfield county, started in 2008 and expanded to 5 locations.

I, share your concern of use of adult products like tobacco, alcohol and vape products by minors. I, also, see the strong need for a broad economy that supports and encourages business while keeping health concerns of minors in mind. Finding a proper balance to manage both of these needs of our population is the key. Making it illegal to sell a product is not only harmful to Connecticut state economy, but also for the thousands of businesses and their employees. Taking such one-sided measures is an abdication of your responsibility to find common ground solutions which serve us all.

Our five stores alone have paid the following taxes to State of Connecticut in Year 2020. (Numbers are provided by employer and with their permission)

Sales Tax: Approximately \$383,000

CT E-Cigarette Tax: Approximately \$113,000

Employee Payroll: Approximately \$361,000

The proposed legislation will force us to close all stores. We can see what happened in state of Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York. Now multiply those numbers by 1000s of stores and you have huge losses to state revenues:

Sales Tax loss: \$383 Million

CT E-Cigarette Tax Loss: \$113 Million

Employee Payroll Loss: \$361 Million

Let us look at problems, below, and possible solutions below:

Problem #1: Sales to minors:

Solution- Federal Age is now 21 to buy tobacco and vape products, State of Connecticut should do the same.

Solution- Online purchase of tobacco and vape products Must require Proof of identification and only delivered to an adult of age 21+.

Solution- For online purchase of vape and tobacco products, online seller must collect all excise taxes and submit such taxes collected to Department of Revenue Services. Under current laws, State of Connecticut is losing tax revenue on these online purchases, as online sellers are not required to collect CT E-cigarette taxes.

Solution- More investment into a robust enforcement of these laws from store to store and higher penalties for non- compliance. Enforcement is the key!

Solution- Ability for retailers to refer an individual to law enforcement if such individuals make continuous attempt to buy such products, including if using Fake IDs. A monetary fine should be proposed for such continuous attempt.

I will not burden you with stories of adults using E-cigarettes to quit smoking, and the FDA previously supported such vehicle to help those adults with a choice to quit smoking. You are all aware of these stories, at this point. I ask that we establish higher penalties against retailers selling to those below age 21; close loop holes in online sales; penalize the buyer attempting purchase illegally; and most importantly invest in law enforcement to enforce the law.