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Right now, my uncle Buddy in Texas is dying of throat cancer, no doubt caused by smoking cigarettes every day of his life since he went into combat in the Vietnam War. This is weighing heavily on me because as a member of this industry and community I have access to every kind of cessation method in every flavor, strength, and variation. For the past five years, I have been trying to help him quit or cut back on cigarettes by offering him these products but he tells me that he doesn't know what's in them and genuinely doesn't want to quit smoking. Despite having inside knowledge of how most of these products are made, and intimate knowledge of the ingredient components that go into them, I could not get my uncle to really understand that these products are NOT the same as big tobacco products. It seems we are battling that misconception here today as well.

At one point or another, smoking has claimed the life of someone we love and big tobacco has been the enemy of every person in this room and as the saying goes, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." We are friends in this battle and we all want the same things. We all want kids to quit using these products and we all want this young generation to see a smoke-free world. We won't get there by pinning the blame on the people that are following the rules and manufacturing and selling responsibly. We won't get there by banning access to this technology that has already saved millions of adults who now get to spend more time raising the children in their families. We need to work together for sensible regulation. None of us produce the products that teens are using. The good stewards of this industry in this state, represented by Maryland Vapor Alliance do NOT market to children, do NOT sell to anyone underage, and can boast that there have been NO underage sales from vape shops in the FDA's compliance check inspections of tobacco product retailers. None.

There is a way to restrict underage access while allowing adults the freedom to quit smoking on their own terms (in addition to harsher penalties for retailers that don't with age restrictions), and that's by eliminating access points like convenience stores while allowing access to flavored and high nicotine products only at age 21 and up vape shops. Instead of driving youth and adults alike into the sinister clutches of the big tobacco death machine, I urge you to work with us towards regulations that make sense. Keep the \$389 million dollars of economic activity in the State of Maryland, keep the jobs of over 1200 Maryland residents, and consider the amendments proposed by the Maryland Vapor Alliance so that our children will never have to watch a loved one die of cancer caused by smoking cigarettes.