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HB0003

My name is Sarah Roberts and I'm a 41 year old that smoked over a pack a day for 20 years. Since I was 19 years old, I had countless battles with pneumonia. After many hospital stays and doctor visits, every single year, the doctors were now telling me if I didn't quit I would die as the antibiotics were no longer working. Over those 20 years I tried gum, the patch and Chantix. Some worked for short amounts of time, but nothing has worked for long stints of time until vaping flavors. The last time the doctors told me I was going to die, and in a much more serious tone, I finally tried vaping. I first tried tobacco flavors. I was able to cut down but was not able to quit fully until I found flavors like strawberry, chewing gum, candy or coffee flavors. Flavors saved my life, literally. Since starting to vape, I have not had a single case of pneumonia in over 6 years. I do not get sick nearly as much and have not had a hospital visit since starting to vape.

When I was younger and smoking and I would end up with pneumonia, I needed assistance financially to pay for those visits to the hospital. The state helped me greatly! I'm sure there are countless people that use the system every year because of similar stories but if vaping can prevent those hospital stays in the first place, why are we trying to ban it! The cost to our state health care programs out weighs any tax money from cigarettes, yet those will remain on the market. Vaping flavors is helping ease the health care costs.

This country was founded on tobacco and it is ingrained into our country and system. People that think we will entirely be rid of tobacco someday, are just crazy! Cigarette smoking is down, why? Two reasons, education and vaping. I honestly believe vaping is the main reason. Teenagers are always going try new things and get into trouble. So instead of looking it vaping like "the new cigarette" lets look at it like it's solving a problem in our society and helping the older generations and preventing the newer generations from choosing analog cigarettes. This is a new form of tobacco that has less risks, saves the state on health care costs, and helps the community in the long run. Let us move on to the newer and much safer alternative for the older and newer generation and hopefully get rid of the analog cigarette that is killing millions world wide and hundreds of thousands of people just in Maryland.

Now if flavors are banned I will be turning to the black market. I will not go back to cigarettes and I will not vape tobacco flavored vapes. It reminds me of a cigarette and makes me crave cigarettes. I'm sorry, but given the choice, I would rather break the law than risk my life by smoking again. I'm choosing my life! The black market will be huge in Maryland as the vaping community is enormous in Maryland and I have been grateful to be a part of it. If flavors are banned it's guaranteeing more burden to our state health care if this happens and it's guaranteeing no tax money being collected from flavors. Banning flavors is not the solution in fact it's the opposite.

In short, lets offer solutions to our community that smokes, offer a helping hand to our health care system and not introduce another black market.

Thank you for your time.