

Testimony of Ayodeji Awopegba
Maryland Resident
February 6, 2020
House Bill 0003: Business Regulation - Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Davis and members of the Economic Matters and Health and Government Operations Committees, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Our testimony will be based on our report titled “State of the Evidence: Flavored Tobacco Bans or Restriction”. I will speak about the public health impacts of comprehensive tobacco flavor restrictions and a restriction on the sale of *only* flavored e-cigarettes.

The evidence clearly shows that comprehensive flavor restrictions can reduce availability of flavored tobacco products and positively impact the health of youth. In 2010, New York City restricted the sales of most flavored tobacco products. Their evaluation data show that sales of all flavored tobacco products declined by 87% and teens during 2013 had 37% lower odds of ever trying flavored tobacco products and 28% lower odds of using any type of tobacco product. Sales of non-flavored tobacco products did not significantly increase. In 2013, Providence, RI restricted the sale of all non-cigarette tobacco products with characterizing flavors (e.g., mango, strawberry, or mint). Providence subsequently experienced a 51% decrease in flavored cigar sales. 93% of the sales reduction was due to a decrease in the sales of cigars with characterizing flavors. Sales of concept flavored cigars (e.g., Jazz, Casino, or Royale) actually increased by 74%.

For a similar policy that applies to e-cigarettes only, the available evidence shows there may be a positive impact and an unintended consequence. For example, one study asked youth and young adults who use flavored e-cigarettes if they would continue using their product of choice if it were not flavored. With the caveat that these data predate JUUL and other pod-based e-cigarettes, they found that the percent who said they would not use their e-cigarette anymore was 66% of those 25-29 years of age, 74% of those 18-24 years of age, 74% of those in high school, and 93% of those in middle school. Another study found that prohibiting flavors in e-cigarettes but permitting menthol cigarettes may drive former smokers to cigarettes, a product known to cause significant long-term harm.

Thank you for your consideration. My colleague, Naseeb Kibria, will now continue providing testimony.

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The opinions expressed herein are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Johns Hopkins University.