

Good morning Chairman and Committee members. My name is Darius Endres. I am the owner of Sports Vape in Fargo. I am here to testify in opposition of HB 1570. Owning a small business is a constant uphill battle during these economic times, and at times it feels like an impossible battle. The rise in costs of inventory, insurance, rent, and liveable wages for your employees is a constant neverending struggle. The increase in cost of our inventory if this Bill were to pass would be detrimental to my business. Competing with the online market has been a losing battle for years. Online has a larger selection compared to a single brick-and-mortar shop. Online you can shop anywhere at any time. This Bill would just further fuel consumers to shop online causing more of my customers to shop elsewhere due to my high retail prices. Another concern I have would be the online shops that have illicit vape products. There is a huge influx of illicit vape products in the market. These products can cause serious health problems as many of them contain harmful chemicals that are not found in brick and mortar shops who are accountable to local public health and law enforcement. Our customers already pay sales tax. My business pays federal tax, state tax, payroll tax, and income tax. At what point do the taxes stop and give the small businesses in our state a fighting chance to succeed? If passed, this Bill could potentially lead to every shop like mine in ND to close its doors. ND is supposed to be the best state in the country for small business owners and entrepreneurs. But a huge tax on my products like the one in this Bill, is just too heavy of a financial burden for us shop owners. Hundreds of employees across the state would be unemployed and more vacant commercial properties will be added to the already many vacant commercial properties that we already have in Fargo. A 56% excise tax on my products is a financial burdern that is way too heavy for me to overcome. So, I kindly and strongly urge this Committee to give this Bill a recommended Do Not Pass. Enough with the taxes already. Thank you chairman and committee for your time and consideration.