



TESTIMONY OF GREGORY CONLEY

MARCH 10, 2017

Re: HB 49 – Taxation of Vapor Products

Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the important topic of vapor products, which are commonly referred to as electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes. Our organization encourages you to remove the provisions of the HB 49 that would impose a new 69% wholesale tax on vapor products.

Vapor products, while not completely safe, are much less harmful than smoking and should not be taxed like cigarettes. Based on the evidence available so far, Public Health England (England's equivalent of the CDC) and the Royal College of Physicians have both issued separate reports estimating e-cigarettes to be at least 95% less harmful than smoking. Furthermore, a recent report by the University of Victoria's Centre for Addictions Research of British Columbia concluded that fears that vaping is a gateway to smoking are unfounded.

Taxing cigarettes and e-cigarettes equally promotes the misunderstanding that they are of equal risk to health, which will further deter smokers from switching to a less harmful alternative. We urge you to see the opportunity that these lower risk products provide to smokers who are unable or unwilling to quit smoking.

We are also concerned about the growing number of vape shops that have been forced to close due to legislation like this. We have seen this happen in other states where similar legislation was passed. For example, in Pennsylvania a 40 percent tax was placed on all vapor products which has forced over 110 businesses to close.

Vapor products are a free market innovation developed in response to a public health threat – smoking – that the government has been unable to solve with taxes and educational campaigns. Please do not stifle the ability of Ohio's two million adult smokers to access these lifechanging products.

Sincerely,

Gregory Conley, J.D., M.B.A.
President – American Vaping Association