

SB 326 Opponent Testimony of Meet Patel

Owner, Sunco Waynesville

December 2, 2024

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Meet Patel, and I am the owner of Sunco Waynesville, a business I purchased and have operated after years of hard work alongside my family. This business is more than just a livelihood—it's a cornerstone of my community. Over the years, I've been proud to offer job opportunities, sponsor my local school district's football team, and give back to my community in every way I can.

When COVID-19 hit, like many small business owners, I faced severe supply shortages and rising costs. Hemp-derived products became essential for my business, helping us cover increased overhead and allowing me to support my workers as they dealt with the rising cost of living. These products have been a lifeline for my business and the families that depend on it.

I am writing this to oppose SB326, which would put my business in a position where I cannot afford to pay my employees their full salaries, and I would have to stop the community support I've provided for years. Worse, my customers would be pushed to buy hemp products from the black market or online, where they remain federally legal and unregulated.

To my trusted legislators, I ask: why not regulate these products instead of banning them? Regulation would not only ensure safety but also allow small businesses like mine to survive. We are already struggling with declining sales of traditional gas station products due to the opening of hundreds of large chain stores coming in from out of state. A ban like this would only increase the pressure on our livelihoods.

I can assure you that, if regulated, I and others in this industry will work hard to ensure compliance, sourcing only from reliable suppliers and educating our staff on following the rules. A ban, however, would devastate thousands of small businesses like mine and hurt the communities we support.

Please consider the real-life impact of SB326 and vote against this harmful bill. Regulation, not prohibition, is the path to ensuring public safety while preserving the livelihoods of small business owners like me.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Meet Patel

Owner, Sunco Waynesville