



AITS

Association of Independent Tobacco Specialists

Subject:

Concerns Regarding Committee Composition and Witness Selection for the Tobacco and Vapes Bill

From:

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1st May 2024

To:

The Chairperson of the Stage Committee of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to express our grave concern regarding the current composition of the committee overseeing the Tobacco and Vapes Bill. While we appreciate the critical importance of public health considerations, it is disheartening to observe an unbalanced focus on this aspect alone.

1. Committee Composition: Looking at the formation of the Committee, it is predominantly members who voted in favour of the bill at the second reading, and only one member with no voted registered. A more diverse committee composition would ensure a comprehensive examination of the bill's impact and possible wider implications.

2. Witness Selection: The witnesses called to testify during committee sessions have predominantly represented public health bodies. While their insights are crucial, we must not overlook the practical realities faced by retailers and the challenges encountered by law enforcement agencies in enforcing regulations. The absence of witnesses from these sectors undermines the close scrutiny that this bill deserves. The lack of representation from retailers and retailers' associations as well as representation from law enforcement agencies on the committee raises serious concerns. As stakeholders directly impacted by the proposed legislation, their perspectives and expertise are invaluable.

Recommendations:

Balanced Representation: We urge the committee to reconsider its composition by including representatives from different opinions of the house.

Officers: P. Patel (Chairman), D Worsfold Vice Chairman, R.A. Page (Secretary) and M Gaglani (Treasurer)
Other Committee Members: P.W. Lloyd*, D Simmonds, Asha Srivastava
Ex Officio: M. Davies* (Legislation Officer), & Ray Godley Consultant.

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Diverse Witnesses: When selecting witnesses, please ensure a balanced representation. Inviting experts from small or medium businesses, retail associations, law enforcement bodies, and industry representatives will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the bill's impact. Their firsthand experiences will enrich the debate and lead to more informed decision-making. No small or medium businesses or representative bodies have been asked give evidence, despite making every effort to engage in this process since it began.

Close Scrutiny: Let us not lose sight of the broader implications beyond public health. The economic, social, and enforcement aspects deserve equal attention. The process has been far from fair and inclusive. Equally concerning is the apparent neglect of domestic business interests in favour of an aggressive and inaccurate interpretation of government obligations under the FCTC treaty. Numerous retailers, importers and distributors who took the time to engage with the consultation process, are told now that their views, as UK taxpayers and contributors to the economy, are neither relevant nor welcome.

We appreciate the committee's commitment to thorough scrutiny, and I trust that these recommendations will be seriously considered. Our collective goal should be legislation that strikes a balance between public health objectives and the practical realities faced by retailers and law enforcement agencies.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to witnessing a more inclusive and comprehensive examination of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.

Sincerely,

Robin A Page



General Secretary, AITS