

House Bill 577

By: Representatives Gaines of the 120<sup>th</sup>, Ridley of the 6<sup>th</sup>, Dempsey of the 13<sup>th</sup>, Stephens of the 164<sup>th</sup>, Williams of the 168<sup>th</sup>, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To amend Title 48 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to revenue and  
2 taxation, so as to enact the "Georgia Nicotine Vapor Products Directory Act"; to provide for  
3 definitions; to require the establishment and maintenance of a directory of nicotine vapor  
4 products authorized for sale in this state; to prohibit the sale of any vapor product containing  
5 nicotine that is not listed in the directory; to provide for compliance checks and enforcement;  
6 to provide for seizure and destruction of contraband; to provide for civil penalties and  
7 enforcement; to provide procedures for the revocation and suspension of licenses for  
8 violations; to provide for statutory construction; to provide for rules and regulations; to  
9 require an annual report to the General Assembly; to provide for related matters; to provide  
10 for contingent effectiveness upon appropriation of funds; to repeal conflicting laws; and for  
11 other purposes.

12 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

13 **SECTION 1.**

14 Title 48 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to revenue and taxation, is  
15 amended by designating Code Sections 48-11-1 through 48-11-30 as Article 1 of Chapter 11  
16 and enacting a new article to read as follows:

H. B. 577

17 "ARTICLE 218 48-11-40.19 This article shall be known and may be cited as the 'Georgia Nicotine Vapor Products  
20 Directory Act.'21 48-11-41.22 As used in this article, the term:23 (1) 'Directory' means the directory of nicotine vapor products the commissioner is  
24 required to develop and maintain as provided in this article.25 (2) 'FDA' means the United States Food and Drug Administration.26 (3) 'Foreign business entity' means an entity formed under a law other than the law of  
27 this state.28 (4) 'Licensee' means any vapor product dealer, vapor product distributor, vapor product  
29 importer, or vapor product manufacturer licensed under Article 1 of this chapter.30 (5) 'Nicotine vapor product' means any consumable vapor product that contains any  
31 amount of nicotine and any vapor device developed or intended to deliver any  
32 consumable vapor product that contains nicotine.33 (6) 'Timely filed premarket tobacco product application' means an application pursuant  
34 to 21 U.S.C. Section 387j for a nicotine vapor product marketed in the United States as  
35 of August 8, 2016, that was submitted to the FDA on or before September 9, 2020, and  
36 accepted for filing.37 48-11-42.38 (a)(1) The commissioner shall develop a process by which vapor product manufacturers  
39 can submit the certification required under subsection (b) of this Code section and any  
40 other information required under this article to be used to create the directory listing

41 required under Code Section 48-11-43 and for such other purposes as provided in this  
42 article. Such process may include a portal or software application accessible through an  
43 internet website. The commissioner may allow a vapor product manufacturer to file a  
44 single certification for all of its nicotine vapor products or require a separate certification  
45 for each nicotine vapor product.

46 (2) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, the commissioner shall be authorized to  
47 disclose the certifications and any other information received pursuant to this chapter,  
48 Chapters 13 and 13A of Title 10, and Title 16 with federal, state, or local courts or  
49 agencies for purposes of enforcing the provisions of this chapter, Chapters 13 and 13A  
50 of Title 10, and Title 16, or the corresponding laws of other states.

51 (b) Within 12 months of the effective date of this article, and annually thereafter, every  
52 vapor product manufacturer that sells nicotine vapor products in this state or sells nicotine  
53 vapor products to a licensee shall execute and deliver a certification to the commissioner  
54 in a format prescribed by the commissioner through rules and regulations. In such  
55 certification, the vapor product manufacturer shall attest, under penalty of perjury, as to  
56 each nicotine vapor product:

57 (1) The vapor product manufacturer in offering such nicotine vapor product for sale in  
58 this state or in selling such nicotine vapor product to a licensee for the purpose of selling  
59 in it in this state is compliant with federal law and this chapter;

60 (2) The nicotine vapor product does not contain any substance or exceed the quantity of  
61 any substance that is illegal to be sold in this state pursuant to federal law or the laws of  
62 this state; and

63 (3)(A) The vapor product manufacturer has submitted a timely filed premarket tobacco  
64 product application for the nicotine vapor product pursuant to 21 U.S.C. Section 387j  
65 to the FDA, and the application either remains under review by the FDA or has  
66 received a marketing denial order that has been and remains stayed by the FDA or court  
67 order, rescinded by the FDA, or vacated by a court; or

68 (B) The vapor product manufacturer has received a marketing granted order under  
69 21 U.S.C. Section 387j for the nicotine vapor product from the FDA.

70 (c) The certification under subsection (b) of this Code section shall require each vapor  
71 product manufacturer to set forth:

72 (1) The name under which the vapor product manufacturer transacts or intends to  
73 transact business;

74 (2) The license identification information for any license issued to the vapor product  
75 manufacturer by the commissioner under Article 1 of this chapter;

76 (3) The address of the location of the vapor product manufacturer's principal place of  
77 business;

78 (4) The vapor product manufacturer's email address;

79 (5) The brand name, category or type, product name, flavor, and description of each of  
80 such vapor product manufacturer's nicotine vapor product that it seeks to have made part  
81 of the directory; and

82 (6) Such other information as may be required by the commissioner pursuant to rules and  
83 regulations.

84 (d) In addition to the certification required under subsection (b) of this Code section, each  
85 vapor product manufacturer shall submit to the commissioner for each nicotine vapor  
86 product a copy of:

87 (1)(A) The cover page of the marketing granted order issued pursuant to 21 U.S.C.  
88 Section 387j;

89 (B) A copy of the acceptance letter issued by the FDA pursuant to 21 U.S.C.  
90 Section 387j for a timely filed premarket tobacco product application; or

91 (C) A document issued by the FDA or by a court confirming that the premarket  
92 tobacco product application has received a denial order that is not yet in effect; and

93 (2) A payment of \$1,000.00 for each nicotine vapor product the first time the vapor  
94 product manufacturer submits a certification for that nicotine vapor product and a  
95 payment of \$250.00 annually thereafter for each such nicotine vapor product.

96 (e) The information submitted by the vapor product manufacturer pursuant to  
97 paragraph (1) of subsection (d) of this Code section shall be considered confidential  
98 commercial or financial information for purposes of Article 4 of Chapter 18 of Title 50.  
99 The vapor product manufacturer may redact certain confidential commercial or financial  
100 information provided under paragraph (1) of subsection (d) of this Code section, subject  
101 to approval by the commissioner. The commissioner shall not disclose such information  
102 except as required or authorized by law.

103 (f) Any vapor product manufacturer that submits a certification pursuant to subsection (b)  
104 of this Code section shall notify the commissioner within 30 days after any material change  
105 to such certification as to any nicotine vapor product, including, but not limited to:

106 (1) Issuance or denial of a marketing authorization or other order by the FDA pursuant  
107 to 21 U.S.C. Section 387j;

108 (2) Any other order by the FDA or a court or any action required by the FDA concerning  
109 the content or quality of the nicotine used in a nicotine vapor product requiring a vapor  
110 product manufacturer to remove such nicotine vapor product from the market either  
111 temporarily or permanently;

112 (3) Any notice of action taken by the FDA affecting the ability of the nicotine vapor  
113 product to be introduced or delivered into interstate commerce for commercial  
114 distribution in the United States; or

115 (4) Any other change deemed material by the commissioner pursuant to the rules and  
116 regulations.

117 (g) The commissioner may by rules and regulations establish a procedure to allow vapor  
118 product manufacturers to renew certifications without having to resubmit all the

119 information required by this Code section, if there has not been any change as to such  
120 information.

121 48-11-43.

122 (a) The commissioner shall develop and maintain a directory listing all the nicotine vapor  
123 products for which a certification has been submitted that complies with this article. Such  
124 directory listing shall include information as to the vapor product manufacturer that  
125 submitted the certification and may include the status of any marketing authorization,  
126 order, or other action of the FDA or any court provided under subsection (b) of Code  
127 Section 48-11-42. The commissioner shall make the directory available on the  
128 department's public website within 14 months of the effective date of this article. The  
129 commissioner on at least a monthly basis shall update the directory to correct mistakes,  
130 ensure accuracy, and add or remove nicotine vapor products as may be necessary. The  
131 commissioner shall establish by rules and regulations a process to provide any vapor  
132 product manufacturer that submits a certification pursuant to Code Section 48-11-42 and  
133 all licensees notice of the initial publication of the directory and changes made to the  
134 directory in the prior month.

135 (b)(1) The commissioner shall provide a vapor product manufacturer with notice of any  
136 deficiencies in the submitted certification and an opportunity to cure such deficiencies  
137 before removing a nicotine vapor product of such vapor product manufacturer from the  
138 directory.

139 (2) The commissioner shall not remove from the directory a nicotine vapor product of  
140 such vapor product manufacturer until at least 15 days after the vapor product  
141 manufacturer has been given notice of such intended action. Notice shall be sufficient  
142 and deemed immediately received by a vapor product manufacturer if the notice is sent  
143 either electronically or by facsimile to an email address or facsimile number provided by

144 the vapor product manufacturer in its most recent certification form for such nicotine  
145 vapor product.

146 (3) The vapor product manufacturer shall have 15 days from the date of service of the  
147 notice of the commissioner's intended action provided pursuant to paragraph (2) of this  
148 subsection to cure any deficiencies or otherwise establish to the satisfaction of the  
149 commissioner that such nicotine vapor product of such vapor product manufacturer  
150 should be included in the directory.

151 (4) A determination by the commissioner not to include in or to remove from the  
152 directory a nicotine vapor product shall be subject to judicial review in the same manner  
153 as is provided by law for judicial review of contested cases under Chapter 13 of Title 50,  
154 the 'Georgia Administrative Procedure Act.'

155 48-11-44.

156 (a) Beginning on the date that the commissioner first makes the directory available on the  
157 department's public website, nicotine vapor products not included in the directory shall not  
158 be sold or purchased in this state except as provided in this Code section.

159 (b)(1) Each vapor product dealer shall have six months from the date that the  
160 commissioner first makes the directory available on the department's public website to  
161 sell nicotine vapor products that were in its inventory and not included in the directory  
162 or to remove those nicotine vapor products from its inventory and return those nicotine  
163 vapor products to the vapor product manufacturer or vapor product distributor from  
164 whom it was acquired for a full refund.

165 (2) Each vapor product distributor shall have six months from the date that the  
166 commissioner first makes the directory available on the department's public website to  
167 remove those nicotine vapor products intended for sale or purchase in this state from its  
168 inventory and return those nicotine vapor products to the vapor product manufacturer  
169 from whom it was acquired for a full refund.

170 (3) After six months following publication of the directory, nicotine vapor products not  
171 listed in the directory and intended for sale or purchase in this state shall be subject to  
172 seizure, forfeiture, storage, and destruction consistent with the provisions of Code  
173 Section 48-11-48 and shall not be sold or purchased in this state except as otherwise  
174 provided in this article.

175 (c)(1) If a nicotine vapor product is removed from the directory, each vapor product  
176 dealer and vapor product distributor shall have 30 days from the date notice is received  
177 that such nicotine vapor product has been removed from the directory to sell such  
178 nicotine vapor product or remove such nicotine vapor product from its inventory and  
179 return such nicotine vapor product to the vapor product manufacturer from whom it was  
180 acquired for a full refund. Each such nicotine vapor product manufacturer shall provide  
181 to the commissioner information regarding the return of such nicotine vapor product  
182 within 21 days after receipt.

183 (2) After 30 days following removal of a nicotine vapor product from the directory, it  
184 shall be unlawful to purchase or sell such nicotine vapor product identified in the notice  
185 of removal in this state and such nicotine vapor product shall be subject to seizure  
186 consistent with the provisions of Code Section 48-11-48. Such prohibition on the  
187 purchase and sale of such nicotine vapor products shall not prohibit the vapor product  
188 manufacturer or vapor product distributor from providing a refund pursuant to this Code  
189 section.

190 48-11-45.

191 Each vapor product dealer and vapor product distributor that sells or distributes vapor  
192 products in this state shall be subject to compliance checks by the department for purposes  
193 of enforcing this article. Unannounced follow-up compliance checks conducted on behalf  
194 of the department of all noncompliant vapor product dealers and vapor product distributors  
195 shall be conducted within 30 days after any violation of this Code section. The

196 commissioner on an annual basis shall make available on the department's public website  
197 the results of all compliance checks.

198 48-11-46.

199 (a) In addition to any other provision of law, a vapor product dealer or a vapor product  
200 distributor that has a nicotine vapor product that is not included in the directory and is  
201 available for sale or is offered for sale in this state in violation of this article shall be  
202 subject to a civil penalty as follows:

203 (1) A violation of a total quantity of 20 nicotine vapor product units or less shall be  
204 punishable:

205 (A) For a first violation, no penalty if the nicotine vapor products are removed as  
206 provided in this chapter;

207 (B) For a second violation within a 12 month period, by a fine of ten times the retail  
208 value of the units of nicotine vapor products involved;

209 (C) For a third violation within an 18 month period, by a fine of 25 times the retail  
210 value of the units of nicotine vapor products involved; and

211 (D) For a fourth violation within a 24 month period, by a fine of 25 times the retail  
212 value of the units of nicotine vapor products involved and revocation of the license of  
213 the vapor product dealer or the vapor product distributor, as applicable, by the  
214 department pursuant to Code Section 48-11-6;

215 (2) A violation of a total quantity of more than 20 nicotine vapor product units shall be  
216 punishable:

217 (A) For a first violation, no penalty if the nicotine vapor products are removed as  
218 provided in this chapter;

219 (B) For a second violation within a 12 month period, by a fine of \$10,000.00 or 50  
220 times the retail value for each unit of nicotine vapor product involved, whichever is  
221 greater;

222 (C) For a third violation within an 18 month period, by a fine of \$20,000.00 or 50 times  
223 the retail value for each unit of nicotine vapor product involved, whichever is greater,  
224 and a 60 day suspension of the license of the vapor product dealer or the vapor product  
225 distributor, as applicable, by the department pursuant to Code Section 48-11-6; and  
226 (D) For a fourth violation within a 24 month period, by a fine of \$30,000.00 or 50  
227 times the retail value for each unit of nicotine vapor product involved, whichever is  
228 greater, and revocation of the license of the vapor product dealer or the vapor product  
229 distributor, as applicable, by the department pursuant to Code Section 48-11-6; and  
230 (3) Notwithstanding paragraphs (1) and (2) of this subsection, a fourth violation of any  
231 quantity of units of nicotine vapor products shall result in a revocation of the license of  
232 the vapor product dealer or the vapor product distributor, as applicable, by the department  
233 pursuant to Code Section 48-11-6.

234 For purposes of this subsection, each unit of a nicotine vapor product that may be sold  
235 individually shall be counted separately to determine the quantity of nicotine vapor  
236 products.

237 (b) A vapor product manufacturer whose nicotine vapor products are not listed in the  
238 directory and that causes the nicotine vapor products that are not listed to be sold in this  
239 state, whether directly or through a vapor product importer, vapor product distributor,  
240 vapor product dealer, or any other person, shall be subject to a civil penalty of \$10,000.00  
241 per day for each individual nicotine vapor product offered for sale in violation of this  
242 chapter until the offending nicotine vapor product is either removed from the market or  
243 properly listed on the directory. In addition, any vapor product manufacturer that falsely  
244 represents any information on the certification or that is required under this chapter to be  
245 provided to the commissioner or the department shall be guilty of a misdemeanor for each  
246 false representation.

247 (c) A repeated violation of this Code section shall constitute a deceptive trade practice  
248 under Part 1 of Article 15 of Chapter 1 of Title 10, the 'Uniform Deceptive Trade Practices  
249 Act.'

250 48-11-47.

251 In an action for any violation brought under this chapter, the commissioner may recover  
252 reasonable expenses incurred in investigating and preparing the case and attorneys' fees if  
253 successful in the initial action, unless such action is successfully appealed and reversed.

254 48-11-48.

255 (a) Any nicotine vapor products offered for sale or sold in violation of this article are  
256 declared to be contraband goods and shall be seized by the commissioner, the  
257 commissioner's agents or employees, or any law enforcement officer of this state if directed  
258 by the commissioner to do so.

259 (b) Upon seizure, the person from whom the contraband property was seized, if known,  
260 shall be provided with a receipt identifying the contraband property seized and indicating  
261 from whom the contraband property was seized and the place of seizure. Such contraband  
262 shall be stored pending a hearing and appeal provided for in subsections (d) and (e) of this  
263 Code section and thereafter destroyed, if authorized.

264 (c) A copy of the receipt shall be:

265 (1) Filed with the department and shall be a public record open to public inspection; and

266 (2) Posted at the courthouse of the county in which the contraband was seized.

267 (d) Any person desiring to make claim to the contraband property shall file a claim with  
268 the commissioner within ten days from the day of seizure. The commissioner, within 30  
269 days of receipt of any such claim, shall afford the claimant a hearing in which to show  
270 entitlement to the seized items. The burden of proof at such hearing shall be upon the  
271 claimant to establish a claim as to the items seized and to show compliance with or

272 justification for noncompliance with this article. The commissioner shall enter a written  
273 order granting or denying the claim within 30 days from the date of the hearing.

274 (e) An appeal from the commissioner's order may be taken to the Superior Court of Fulton  
275 County by filing with the commissioner, within 15 days from the date of the decision, a  
276 copy of the petition for review filed in the Superior Court of Fulton County. The  
277 proceedings on the petition for review shall be governed by Chapter 3 of Title 5 except as  
278 provided otherwise in this Code section. The appeal shall be based upon the record made  
279 before the commissioner. The commissioner shall transmit the record and appropriate  
280 documents to the superior court within 30 days after the date the petition for review is  
281 received. The superior court shall review the record for errors of law, violation of  
282 constitutional or statutory provisions, violation of the statutory authority of the agency,  
283 lawfulness of the procedure, lack of any evidence to support the commissioner's decision,  
284 and arbitrariness and abuse of discretion. However, the court shall not substitute its  
285 judgment as to the weight of evidence on questions of fact.

286 (f) The cost of such seizure, forfeiture, storage, and destruction shall be borne by the  
287 person from whom the nicotine vapor products determined to be contraband are  
288 confiscated.

289 48-11-49.

290 (a) Any nonresident vapor product manufacturer that has not registered to do business in  
291 this state as a foreign business entity shall, as a condition precedent to being included in  
292 the directory, appoint and continually engage without interruption the services of an agent  
293 in this state to act as agent for the service of process on whom all process, and any action  
294 or proceeding against it concerning or arising out of the enforcement of this article, may  
295 be served in any manner authorized by law. Such service shall constitute legal and valid  
296 service of process on the vapor product manufacturer. The vapor product manufacturer

297 shall provide the name, address, telephone number, and proof of the appointment and  
298 availability of such agent to the commissioner.

299 (b) The vapor product manufacturer shall provide notice to the commissioner 30 days prior  
300 to termination of the authority of an agent and shall further provide proof to the satisfaction  
301 of the commissioner of the appointment of a new agent no less than five days prior to the  
302 termination of an existing agent appointment. In the event an agent terminates an agency  
303 appointment, the vapor product manufacturer shall notify the commissioner of the  
304 termination within five days and shall include proof to the satisfaction of the commissioner  
305 of the appointment of a new agent.

306 (c) Any vapor product manufacturer whose nicotine vapor products are offered for sale or  
307 sold in this state that has not appointed and engaged the services of an agent as required by  
308 this Code section shall be deemed to have appointed the Secretary of State as its agent for  
309 service of process. The appointment of the Secretary of State as agent shall not satisfy the  
310 condition precedent required in subsection (a) of this Code section to be included or  
311 retained in the directory.

312 48-11-50.

313 Nothing in this article shall be construed as limiting the commissioner in the exercise of  
314 his or her authority, as provided under Article 1 of this chapter, to suspend or refuse to  
315 renew a license for violations of Chapters 13 and 13A of Title 10, Title 16, Title 48, or any  
316 other provisions of law and any rules or regulations promulgated thereunder.

317 48-11-51.

318 Starting on January 31 of the first year after the year in which this article becomes  
319 effective, and annually thereafter, the commissioner shall provide a report to the General  
320 Assembly regarding the status of the directory, the nicotine vapor products included in the

321 directory, revenue, and expenditures related to administration of this article, and  
322 enforcement activities undertaken pursuant to this article."

323 **SECTION 2.**

324 This Act shall become effective only if funds are specifically appropriated for the purposes  
325 of this Act in an appropriations Act making specific reference to this Act and shall become  
326 effective when funds so appropriated become available for expenditure.

327 **SECTION 3.**

328 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.