



MDGASP



Maryland Group Against Smoker's Pollution
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Testimony in support of Senate Flavors Bill SB 233

by

John O' Hara: Ph. D
President: Maryland Group Against Smoker's Pollution

February 13, 2020

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Honorable Committee members,

My name is John O' Hara. I am the President of the Maryland Group Against Smoker's Pollution (MDGASP), an organization with over 1,000 members across the state. We have members from every district in the state.

I am 86 years old and over the last four decades I have testified before committees of the Maryland General Assembly every single year pertaining to tobacco and/or vaping control. Over these many years the State of Maryland has passed several bills to protect the health of its citizens from the ravages of tobacco smoke. I commend the General Assembly for these efforts, however, we still have a long way to go.

During the many tobacco control hearings I attended, the Committee members and attendees heard the tobacco industry tell many half-truths and in some cases blatant lies. For example:

1. Tobacco is harmless ...while they were killing thousands every day
2. Second hand smoke is harmless ...even as they killed several hundred nonsmokers daily
3. Nicotine is not addictive ... even as they hooked thousands of children ever day
4. They did not want children to smoke ...even as they used Joe Camel and other unethical advertising techniques to hook them
5. The entire hospitality business will go bankrupt if we ban smoking in public places.

Fortunately, the previous Assembly members saw through the tactics of the tobacco industry and passed marvelous legislation to protect our citizens. Now we are hearing the same kind of rhetoric from the vaping industry, some of whom are owned by the tobacco industry

Over 25% of our high school students and even 10% of our eighth graders are hooked on vaping. The facts are clear that vaping is harmful and extremely addictive. Many adults and young people are dying from vaping.

In order to protect ALL Maryland residents and especially our young people, I urge the Council to pass the strongest possible legislation to prohibit the distribution and sale of ALL flavored tobacco and vape products. The physical health of your constituents is far more important than the financial health of the tobacco and vaping industry.

Respectfully.

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