



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Senate Bill 233

Business Regulation - Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition

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Position: Support- February 13, 2020

Prohibiting the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, small, flavored cigars, and vape products is the most powerful step possible to reverse the recent wave of nicotine addiction. SB 233 will substantially decrease health disparities among Maryland’s African-American population who have been targeted by the tobacco industry for decades with menthol products¹, and immediately begin to reverse the proliferation of teen vaping and nicotine addiction. Prohibiting flavored tobacco products will reduce health insurance costs for small and large businesses, lead to hundreds of millions of dollars in Medicaid savings over coming years, and help pave the way to a healthier and more productive workforce in Maryland.

103,000 Maryland high school students use flavored vape products.²

Small cigars, essentially flavored cigarettes in a tobacco leaf wrapper, are smoked by more high schoolers than cigarettes.³

95.6% of young people start tobacco and vape use with a flavored product.⁴

- 94% of African American youth and 85% African American adult smokers use menthol products⁵ compared to 26% of whites. This is primarily attributable to industry marketing.
- **Flavors, including menthol, make quitting tobacco products more difficult.^{4,6}**

Nicotine is unsafe for adolescents. It **impairs brain development, alters mood, harms impulse control, and increases the likelihood of future addiction to other drugs, including opioids.⁷**

From 2013-2019, high schoolers use of e-cigarettes increased 600%.⁸ Use among adults 25 and older increased <1%.⁹

The percentage of teens using vape products (29.5%) is 10x greater than the percentage of adults using vape products (3%).^{1,9} These teens are at increased risk of conversion to cigarette smoking.

As a result of vaping, 8 adolescents begin to smoke cigarettes for every 1 adult smoker who quits.¹¹

A meta-analysis of 25 studies show *smokers who turn to vaping as a means of cessation are 27% less likely to quit* than those using FDA recommended methods.¹²

Prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products will have an immediate impact on adolescent and young adult health factors:

- Preterm births will decline as fewer young women are exposed to nicotine, saving millions in annual Medicaid costs
- SIDS deaths will be prevented as fewer young mothers and fathers use tobacco products
- Child and adolescent asthma cases will be reduced along with associated Medicaid expenditures

Tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable death and disability in the U.S.^{13,14} **Each year, tobacco-related diseases cost the Maryland economy \$2.7 billion in direct medical expenses of which \$576 million is covered by Medicaid, and an additional \$2.2 billion in lost productivity to Maryland businesses.**

75% of parents of middle and high school students favor a ban on flavored tobacco products.¹⁵

Banning flavored tobacco products will lead to a healthier and more fiscally sound Maryland for generations to come.

Thank you for considering **support for SB 233: Business Regulation-Flavored Tobacco Products- Prohibition.**

For more information, contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-614-6891.

References:

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