



## **Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association**

To the Finance Committee

February 13, 2020

Senate Bill 233: Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products - Prohibition

### **POSITION: SUPPORT**

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Senator Augustine, Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and members of the Finance Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 233: Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition.

This legislation would provide that certain licenses to manufacture, sell, buy, and store cigarettes, other tobacco products, and electronic smoking devices do not authorize the licensee to manufacture, ship, import, or sell into or within the State a flavored tobacco product with a taste or smell of fruit, mint, candy, or other nontobacco flavors; providing that a public statement that cigarettes, other tobacco products, or electronic smoking devices have or produce a certain smell or taste is presumptive evidence that they are flavored tobacco products; etc.

MRHA’s mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Maryland law states that “many rural communities in the State face a host of difficult challenges relating to persistent unemployment, poverty, changing technological and economic conditions, an aging population and an out-migration of youth, inadequate access to quality housing, health care and other services, and deteriorating or inadequate transportation, communications, sanitations, and economic development infrastructure.” (West’s Annotated Code of Maryland, State Finance and Procurement § 2-207.8b)

The 2018 Maryland Rural Health Plan ([www.MDRuralHealthPlan.org](http://www.MDRuralHealthPlan.org)), an extensive assessment of Maryland’s rural health needs, illustrates the teen smoking crisis across our 18 rural jurisdictions. Flavored tobacco products lure kids into a life-long struggle with tobacco addiction, hooking them on products targeted to them in flavors like mint or menthol, gummy bear, and cotton candy.

MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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