



February 13th, 2024

Testimony of Laura Hale

American Heart Association

Oppose SB 589 Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland - Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission - Funding

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Honorable Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee ,

Thank you for your time and consideration on our concerns with this legislation. My name is Laura Hale and I am the Director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association. The American Heart Association extends its opposition for SB 589 as it will remove funding away from the intended purpose of the Cigarette Restitution Fund which is to combat tobacco use in the state and into other programs.

The American Heart Association is committed to making a world of longer healthier lives. Part of a world of longer healthier lives is people never starting to consume tobacco. The Maryland Department of Health does amazing work with the funds the state provides to address tobacco use and help smokers/vapers quit. With this legislation it will remove up to 5% of funds from the Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF) and that will set back the work that is currently being done to stop youth vaping and tobacco use. The CRF was set up with funds from the tobacco industry to combat the lies the industry told which addicted people to tobacco in Maryland. Unfortunately, we still have many Marylanders who start these products every year. With the increase of vaping among teens, now is not the time to take money away from the Health Department to address this crisis.

The American Heart Association urges an unfavorable report on this legislation.