



American Lung Association Testimony Senate Bill 589

Senate Budget and Taxation

February 13, 2024

Oppose

Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe and Members of the Committee:

We thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Senate Bill 589 – Tri County Council for Southern Maryland-Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission Funding which would increase funding to the Tri County Council for Southern Maryland to \$1 million and require an appropriation in the state budget of 5% of the amount allocated to the state under the Master Settlement Agreement. The American Lung Association strongly opposes this bill as it would divert important investments in tobacco control and prevention program funding.

The American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease, through research, education and advocacy. The work of the American Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer; to improve the air we breathe; to reduce the burden of lung disease on individuals and their families; and to eliminate tobacco use and tobacco-related diseases.

In the recent release of the American Lung Association's [State of Tobacco Control](#), it was noted that the funding for Maryland's Tobacco Control and Prevention program at approximately \$22.9 million is (inclusive of approximately \$1.7 million of federal CDC funds) woefully lower than the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommended level of \$48 million, at 47.8%. The Lung Association strongly supports protecting and increasing this funding especially considering the epidemic levels of youth use of electronic smoking devices and the need to develop educational programs and outreach to prevent youth from initiating tobacco use and encourage current smokers to quit and not switch. Diverting funding away from the tobacco control and prevention program will undermine efforts to address tobacco use in Maryland.

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, killing an estimated 480,000 Americans and [7,500 Marylanders](#) each year.¹ The American Lung Association supports funding of evidence-based tobacco prevention, education and cessation programs. These programs should focus their efforts on the populations most disproportionately impacted by tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure.

In data from the [2023 National Tobacco Youth Survey](#), tobacco use among high school and middle school students continue to show epidemic levels with more than 2.8 million youth using a tobacco product. The American Lung Association is particularly alarmed at the frequency of use by middle school students with the CDC report showing a significant increase in tobacco use. The report showed that tobacco use overall for middle school students increased nearly 50% from 4.5% to 6.6%. The report also shows that 2.1 million youth are still vaping, and over 25% are vaping daily which indicates a very high addiction rate. In [Maryland](#), 23% of high school students use an electronic smoking device. Nearly 90% of the youth survey respondents reported using flavored e-cigarettes including mint and menthol. In

addition, of the youth who smoke, 40.4% smoke menthol cigarettes. Flavored tobacco products remain the primary gateway for youth addiction. The tobacco industry has continued to target youth users with marketing of flavored tobacco products which makes them appealing to youth, with many of them not realizing that these products contain nicotine. As a result, we are setting our kids up for a lifetime of addiction and losing the opportunity for the first tobacco-free generation.

An important tool in fighting tobacco use in Maryland is the tobacco control and prevention program funding which comes from the Cigarette Restitution Fund. Diverting funding to other programs undermines the ability for Maryland's tobacco control and prevention program to implement evidence based programming to address tobacco use in our state. Given the lack of best practice recommended funding, the Lung Association believes we must not support any efforts to reduce funding but focus on increasing funding to the tobacco control and prevention program

Thank you for your continued commitment to the health and wellbeing of the residents of Maryland, we urge you to oppose Senate Bill 589 which would divert important investments in tobacco control and prevention funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Aleks Casper".

Aleks Casper
Director of Advocacy, Maryland
202-719-2810

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking: 50 Years of Progress. A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health 2014.