



Maryland Center for Health Equity
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College Park, Maryland 20742-2611

March 28th 2024

The Honorable C.T. Wilson
House Economic Matters Committee, Chair
231 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401
March 28, 2024

RE: SB 1056 - Cigarettes, Other Tobacco Products, and Electronic Smoking Devices - Revisions (Tobacco Retail Modernization Act of 2024)

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Wilson,

My name is Dr. Francesca Weaks , a Faculty Researcher at University of Maryland Center for Health Equity ,where I have the pleasure to work with Dr. Stephen B. Thomas, Professor of Health Policy and Management and Director, the University of Maryland Center for Health Equity. I speak in my personal capacity today. I appreciate the opportunity to hear my support for Senate Bill 1056- Cigarettes, Other Tobacco Products, and Electronic Smoking Devices - Revisions (Tobacco Retail Modernization Act of 2024). I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 1056.

According to the CDC (2023), 2.13 million U.S. middle and high school students reported using e-cigarettes in the past 30 days, including 4.6% of middle school students and 10.0% of high school students. E-cigarettes are being marketed to youth and young adults as a less harmful alternative to cigarettes. Although true, e-cigarettes still contain potentially harmful substances, including nicotine, heavy metals like lead, volatile organic compounds, and cancer-causing agents (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2016).

E-Cigarettes contain nicotine , an addictive chemical that can have a significant impact on the development of adolescent's brains and can harm the parts of the brain that control attention, learning, mood, and impulse control until development ends at age 25(Taylor, 2014). E-cigarettes are a gateway to smoking cigarettes. Obisesan et. al (2019) found that youth e-cigarette and cigarette use have been associated with mental health symptoms such as depression.

One of my areas of research examines the impact of marketing strategies on youth and young adults that utilize Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning(AI/ML) integrated with social media and the impact that it has on health outcomes. It only takes one time for a teenager to explore tobacco products online for AI/ML programs to send them further advertisements on their curiosity and introduce them to a variety of tobacco products .

I am deeply committed to helping to address the public health challenges of underserved communities across Maryland and the country, and ensuring these communities have trust in the health care system and public health systems. I believe that updating the standing order to limit sales of tobacco products is an accountable and responsible decision for all Marylanders.

Thank you for your consideration. Again, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 1056

Sincerely,

Francesca Weaks

Francesca Weaks

Faculty Researcher

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