



Dear Chair Wilson,

I am writing to you on behalf of CLIA (Community Law in Action), to express my support for SB 1056, the Tobacco Retail Modernization Act of 2024. I support this bill because the detrimental impact of tobacco on individuals and communities extends beyond physical health, contributing to social disparities, economic hardship, and diminished quality of life.

Creating a tobacco-free environment for the next generation is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic investment in our collective future. By implementing comprehensive tobacco control policies, including smoke-free laws, tobacco taxation, public education campaigns, and access restrictions, we can effectively reduce tobacco initiation, promote cessation, and protect nonsmokers from the harms of secondhand smoke.

Despite progress in tobacco control, the problem of youth access to tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, remains significant. Data indicates that over 48,000 Maryland high school students **self-report** they use tobacco products, a number that likely falls short of the true total. The marketing strategies and new products like flavored e-cigarettes target and hook kids, Big Tobacco's next generation of customers.

The impact of youth tobacco use is both a public health and economic burden. Maryland incurs annual healthcare costs of approximately \$3.14 billion directly related to smoking, and 27.5% cancer-related Maryland deaths can be traced to tobacco use. We must act now to mitigate its influence on the health of our children and our communities at large.

SB 1056 proposes to impose stricter penalties on illegal sales to minors, including increased fines and potential license suspension for violators, restrict access to vapes to licensed dealers, and mandates a study on youth access to tobacco products. It also increases the cost of the tobacco retail license to help fund enforcement activities by our state and county agencies that help protect our communities from bad actors. These steps are crucial for developing effective healthcare and public health strategies to protect Maryland's youth and to ensure that retailers are held accountable to state and federal law.

I urge you to vote in favor of SB 1056, the Tobacco Retail Modernization Act of 2024. Thank you for your consideration and for taking a stand on behalf of our youth.

Sincerely,



Rashad Staton, Executive Director  
Community Law in Action (CLIA)