



Tree House Project, Inc.

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,

I am writing to you as a parent, mentor, and youth advocate living in Baltimore City, to express my support for SB 1056, the Tobacco Retail Modernization Act of 2024. I fully support the proposed bill aimed at preventing companies from targeting youth and children by enticing them with cigarette smoking, thereby curbing the progression towards drug use. This legislation is crucial in safeguarding our young generations and disrupting the pipeline leading to substance abuse.

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.

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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,

Shaleece Williams

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