



The Honorable Pam Beidle
Senate Finance Committee, Chair
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East Wing
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

March 7, 2024

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

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Beidle,

I am writing to you as Kyle Olabi, student/youth advocate, living in Silver Spring, Maryland, to express my support for SB 1056, the Tobacco Retail Modernization Act of 2024. I support this bill because growing up throughout my life I have noticed how people around me are beginning to become more addicted to these flavored tobacco products. Everywhere I go whether it be the store or school I always see someone with them. I even began to notice these products in my own home when I was younger. My own siblings have gotten their hands on these products and would always be in the garage with their friends using it. I am still able to remember the stench of the flavored tobacco hitting me in the face every time I walked into that garage just to pick up an item for my parents. When I grew up I thought that they started to become more irrelevant in life until I hit middle school. While I was sitting in theater class I was able to notice some of my peers using flavored tobacco products in the corner. That wasn't the only instance I noticed these products in school. I even was familiar with a kid who would be selling them in school to other students as well. The only thing going through my mind at the time wasn't school work but it was more like I needed to get out of there as soon as possible. I didn't really get to hang out much after school because everyone around seemed to be addicted to these products and I didn't want to be dragged into these products with them.

After what felt like escaping the insufferable cloud in middle school I finally got to high school where I was thinking that finally people would be open with each other and not have their heads in their products. It seemed like wishful thinking but I was really hoping for the best. Just like my expectations with middle school, flavored tobacco seemed to be more severe in high school. Every time I go to the bathroom there is always someone in the stall and I can smell the flavored tobacco in the air. The administration has held multiple assemblies regarding this issue and they even closed the bathrooms on the third floor of my building. If that wasn't enough they even implemented a period where in the early morning we can only stay on the first floor until 20-25 minutes before class. I am so sick of all of these flavored tobacco products leaving an impact on my life. I have been trying to avoid this constantly but it is so apparent around me that I can never truly avoid it. Students seem to be at each other's throats just for some of these flavored tobacco products and it makes it hard to feel safe in my own school. I just try to get home as safe as I can because the last thing I want is to put my mom through grief just for accidentally getting in someone's way to get a puff of these products.

In order to pave a safer path for the students of the future these companies need to stop lying to the

youth claiming that these products are healthier than weed because they don't contain nicotine so they won't cause an addiction. But an addiction is caused due to an overflow of dopamine and as long as these youth can get that rush they will never quit and do anything to get that dopamine rush. Without a change society can easily take a turn for the worse leaving a dangerous environment for the kids of the future. To be able to successfully create a safe environment for the children of the future I ask our policy makers to stand up and do something to attempt to ban these products because imagine if it was your own child that was addicted to these flavored tobacco products unable to break free from its sealed grasp on them. That is what multiple parents have to deal with because you aren't doing anything to help us fight it. So I ask again, fight with us and ban these products. 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 with me.

Sincerely,
Kyle Olabi
Youth Activism Project