



Baltimore-Washington Conference

The United Methodist Church

REV. DR. STACEY COLE WILSON
EXECUTIVE MINISTER OF BELOVED COMMUNITY
SCOLEWILSON@BWCUMC.ORG
WWW.BWCUMC.ORG
TEL. 240-222-6895 | 800-492-2525

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

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

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

Dear Chair Beidle,

Grace and peace to you. I hope you're well. I am writing to you as the Executive Minister of Beloved Community for the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church and as a concerned resident of Maryland, to express my support for SB 1056, the Tobacco Retail Modernization Act of 2024. The United Methodist Church and its predecessor denominations have a long history of witness against the use and marketing of tobacco products. There is overwhelming evidence linking cigarette smoking with lung cancer, cardiovascular diseases, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and related illnesses.

As a parent and faith leader, I support this bill because have personally witnessed the devastating impacts of tobacco products including e-cigarettes on school-aged children. I have counseled families with children addicted to vaping by the ages of 12 and 14 and those of various ages who are struggling to get their lives back on track. Students have mentioned use of odorless cigarettes in school restrooms and easy access to these products.

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

11711 EAST MARKET PLACE, FULTON, MD 20759-2594

TRANSFORMED LIVES TRANSFORM LIVES



Baltimore-Washington Conference

The United Methodist Church

REV. DR. STACEY COLE WILSON

EXECUTIVE MINISTER OF BELOVED COMMUNITY

SCOLEWILSON@BWCUMC.ORG

WWW.BWCUMC.ORG

TEL. 240-222-6895 | 800-492-2525

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. It is a health crisis. 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,

Rev. Dr. Stacey Cole Wilson
BWCUMC