



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Budget and Taxation Committee

January 29, 2020

Senate Bill 3: Electronic Smoking Devices, Other Tobacco Products, Cigarettes - Taxation and Regulation

POSITION: SUPPORT

Senator McCray, Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Budget and Taxation Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in **SUPPORT** of Senate Bill 3: Electronic Smoking Devices, Other Tobacco Products, Cigarettes - Taxation and Regulation.

This legislation would apply certain provisions of tax law regulating the sale, manufacture, distribution, possession, and use of cigarettes and other tobacco products to certain electronic smoking devices; alter the definition of "other tobacco products" to include certain consumable products and the components or parts of those products and to exclude certain other products; require the Governor, in fiscal year 2022 and thereafter, to include at least \$21,000,000 in the annual budget for certain activities aimed at reducing tobacco use; etc.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

Maryland law states that "many rural communities in the State face a host of difficult challenges relating to persistent unemployment, poverty, changing technological and economic conditions, an aging population and an out-migration of youth, inadequate access to quality housing, health care and other services, and deteriorating or inadequate transportation, communications, sanitations, and economic development infrastructure." (West's Annotated Code of Maryland, State Finance and Procurement § 2-207.8b)

And while Maryland is one of the richest states, there is great disparity in how wealth is distributed. The greatest portion of wealth resides around the Baltimore/Washington Region; while further away from the I-95 corridor, differences in the social and economic environment are very apparent.

MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

Lara Wilson, Executive Director, larawilson@mdruralhealth.org, 410-693-6988