



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE
HOUSE BILL 3**

**Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products - Prohibition
Ernest Carter, MD, PhD, Health Officer, Prince Georg’s County Health Department
For the Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO)**

Position: Support – February 6, 2020

Chairman Davis, members of the House Economic Matters Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. On behalf of the Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO), the association of the chief executives of the Local Public Health Departments in Maryland’s twenty-four (24) jurisdictions, I offer our **strong support for HB 3**.

Public health has made significant reductions in youth smoking thanks to legislation such as Maryland’s 2007 Clean Indoor Air Act and the 2009 Federal Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act. However, today we have a new problem: our state’s young people are using flavored vape and tobacco products at alarming rates and are being diagnosed with health issues, even dying, and we don’t yet know why. In my county, Prince George’s, 1 in 3 high school students and 1 in 4 middle school students, have tried an electronic vapor product.¹ Ninety (90) percent of youth who have tried vaping using a tobacco product with added flavoring.² As we know, the brain is not fully developed until age 25.³ As a pediatrician, I can tell you that nicotine has a devastating effect on the developing teenage brain that may result in slowed brain function, increased addiction, and emotional and psychiatric difficulties.⁴ There is substantial evidence that youth vaping increases the risk of using traditional cigarettes.⁵

We know the impacts of nicotine, but the effects of vaping products, because they also include chemicals like flavorings, propellants, solvents, and oils, is unknown.⁶ We do know that the CDC is currently investigating over 1,600 cases of people nationwide, some as young as 13 years old, getting severe lung illnesses and injuries due to vaping; dozens of patients have died.⁷ By banning flavored vaping products, HB 3 will deter many young people from trying vaping, and hopefully, prevent further preventable illnesses and deaths of our young people.

HB 3 would also ban flavored tobacco products like menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars and cigarillos, a measure that is long overdue. While overall cigarette sales decreased from 2011 to 2015, sales of menthol cigarettes increased.⁸ After the 2009 Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act passed, menthol cigarettes are the only flavored cigarette product left on the market.

¹ Information pulled from the October 2019 Prince George’s County Health Department Vaping factsheet. Data source is the 2016 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

² Information pulled from the October 2019 Prince George’s County Health Department Vaping factsheet. Data source is the 2016 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

³ <https://www.yalemedicine.org/stories/vaping-nicotine-addiction/>

⁴ Goriounova NA, Mansvelder HD. Nicotine exposure during adolescence alters the rules for prefrontal cortical synaptic plasticity during adulthood. *Front Synaptic Neurosci.* 2012;4:3. Published 2012 Aug 2. doi:10.3389/fnsyn.2012.00003

⁵ American Lung Association, <https://www.lung.org/stop-smoking/smoking-facts/e-cigarettes-and-lung-health.html>

⁶ Pulled directly from the October 2019 Prince George’s County Health Department Vaping factsheet. Information source is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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⁸ <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0390.pdf>

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Young people are more likely to try menthol-flavored cigarettes and more likely to become addicted when this flavoring is present.⁹ CDC data indicates menthol products have been “*aggressively marketed*” to young people and African Americans.¹⁰

African American men smoke cigars and cigarillos more than other racial/ethnic groups and the majority of young cigar users use flavored products.¹¹

There is no reason for tobacco products to be sold in grape, vanilla, apple, or menthol flavors other than to addict new users. Passage of HB 3 is vitally important to protect our young people of color, who have been targeted by the tobacco industry’s aggressive marketing. Your support for this legislation will have an immediate, positive impact on public health.

Members of the Economic Matters Committee, we urge you to protect our young people. A vote for HB 3 is a vote to reduce lung-related disease and death in Maryland.

Thank you for time, consideration and good work. Thank you for protecting all Marylanders.

For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaiora1@jhu.edu or 410-614-6891. This communication reflects the position of MACHO.

⁹ <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0390.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/disparities/african-americans/index.htm>

¹¹ <https://truthinitiative.org/sites/default/files/media/files/2019/03/Cigars-Fact-Sheet-10-2017.pdf>