



**Mission:** *To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy*

**Vision:** *Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities*

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### **HB 3 – Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition**

Hearing Date: February 6, 2020

Committee: Economic Matters

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Public Health Association would like to thank Chairman Dereck Davis and the other members of the Economic Matters Committee for this important hearing and legislative action on flavored tobacco products. We are testifying to express our strongest support for a comprehensive ban on flavored tobacco products in the state of Maryland.

The Maryland Public Health Association (MdPHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals who are dedicated to improving the lives and health of all Marylanders. MdPHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a national organization that has been working for nearly 150 years to improve population health and reduce the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.

Despite the dedication and decades of hard work to improve and maintain the health of Marylanders, an estimated 7,500 adults in this state will die this year – as they do every year – from smoking. It is projected that of all the kids in Maryland today who are under age 18, an estimated 92,000 of them will die prematurely from smoking. This means that smoking continues to kill more people than all of those who die from alcohol, AIDS, car crashes, illegal drugs, murders, and suicides *combined*. Research also estimates that smoking costs Marylanders \$2.71 billion in health care costs each year and \$2.22 billion in lost productivity. These incredible costs bring absolutely no good to anyone in our state except for the profits of tobacco companies.

Make no mistake about it – tobacco companies know exactly what they are doing – marketing and misleading about their products to make maximum profit. And they have gotten very good at it over the years. Despite being the biggest distributors of a lethal product in the history of mankind, tobacco companies denied for decades that there was any connection between smoking and health. In fact, almost every time these companies have offered what they label as “public health protections,” it has been a masking of movements to expand their markets.

- For decades they denied that nicotine was addictive, despite the clear evidence that it is the world’s most deadly and addictive drug.
- They denied manipulating nicotine levels to create and sustain addiction.
- They said that filters would protect smokers from harm.
- They said that low tar and low nicotine cigarettes would protect smokers from harm.
- They denied that secondhand smoke could hurt anyone

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Most recently, tobacco companies have purported that e-cigarettes were *cessation* devices. But this has not been documented in the research literature. E-cigarettes are not being used to help smokers quit. But they are proving to be incredibly effective in recruiting new smokers among our children. In November of last year, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that “more than 1 in 4 high school students (more than 5 million teens nationwide) now use flavored e-cigarettes monthly.” More than 80% of young people who use tobacco products report starting with a flavored product. In addition, flavors such as menthol can make quitting tobacco products even more difficult.

It would be ideal if we could go back before tobacco became endemic and simply prevent it from going to market. But that time is long past. At this point in history we must do everything we can to contain the damage inflicted by tobacco. And preventing tobacco companies from making their products even more enticing to children is certainly something that we can and must do.

E-cigarettes penetrated our population so quickly that it has been difficult to accurately assess the damage they are inflicting. But as of January 28, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported a total of 2,711 hospitalizations for sickness and deaths related to vaping. As of January 21, 2020, 60 vaping-related deaths had been confirmed in 27 states and the District of Columbia.

As our elected public officials responsible for protecting the health and safety of your constituents, one of the most important things that you can do is prevent the marketing of e-cigarettes, especially to our children, through the use of flavors. The Maryland Public Health Association urges you strongly to do so.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.