

**Holy Cross Health
Silver Spring, Maryland**

**Written Testimony in Support of SB233
“Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition”
February 13, 2020**

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I write today on behalf of Holy Cross Health (Silver Spring, Md.) in support of SB 0233 “Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition” and, further, to extend our appreciation to the chair, Senator Delores Kelley, and vice chair, Senator Brian Feldman, for their leadership and sponsorship of this important legislation.

Holy Cross Health has worked diligently, alongside local and state organizations, to decrease the use of tobacco and nicotine products (including e-cigarettes), particularly among our adolescent and teen populations. We strongly supported Tobacco 21 legislation and, last year, our collective efforts yielded the successful passage of the legislation, which was signed into law by Governor Hogan. Raising the purchasing age for tobacco and nicotine products from 18 to 21 in Maryland was an important step.

But we still have work to do.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), most youth e-cigarette users start the habit with a flavored variety, and flavored nicotine is the primary reason youth report using e-cigarettes. The CDC also reports that nearly 9 out of 10 cigarette smokers first try cigarette smoking by age 18, and 98% by age 26. The National Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids also reports that flavored tobacco products attract youth, a targeted demographic that represents a growing market for flavored tobacco products, thereby undermining the nation’s overall progress in reducing tobacco and nicotine use.

The adverse effects of smoking are well-documented, both long-term, such as lung cancer and other chronic diseases, and short-term, such as inflammatory and respiratory ailments.

It is imperative that we continue to collectively work to stop our youth from ever starting to use tobacco and nicotine products, and, importantly, reduce their overall appeal. This can be accomplished, in part, by removing flavored tobacco and nicotine products from the market, which heavily advertises to youth.

Holy Cross Health urges the Senate Finance Committee to protect the health of our youth by supporting SB 0233 and favorably advancing the bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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