



WMDA/CAR Service Station and Automotive Repair Association

February 13, 2020

Chairman: Delores G. Kelley
Members of Senate Finance Committee

RE: SB 233 Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition

Position: In Opposition

Banning menthol cigarettes and flavored smokeless tobacco in Maryland will have unintended consequences to adult and potential youth smokers, taxes received and retailers.

Maryland has already seen contraband sale arrests in recent months on a large-scale operation. Banning traditional menthol cigarettes and smokeless flavors will bring organized gangs and criminals into our neighborhoods to sell not only these products but many others including the back room brewed vape products that need to be banned. These people ask for no I.D. and pay no taxes. They make criminals out of formally honest citizens and smokers, or worse, out of our youth.

Retailers who have seen expenses and labor costs go up in recent years will not only lose tobacco sales, but ancillary sales, and the state loses taxes from those sales. Adult smokers should not have to sneak around to buy their product or drive to a surrounding state who will gladly sell them tobacco or fuel at lower price.

In closing, prohibition didn't work out and neither will a menthol ban to persons 21 and older. Maryland will only enrich the states around them, create crime and lose the best way to verify age. Make the state of Maryland a 100% swipe verification state, no exceptions and let the retailers do their job.

Please give SB233 an unfavorable report.

WMDA/CAR is a trade association that has represented service stations, convenience stores and independent repair shops since 1937. Any questions can be addressed to Kirk McCauley, 301-775-0221 or kmccauley@wmda.net