

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 732
Electronic Smoking Devices, Other Tobacco Products, and Cigarettes -
Taxation and Regulation**

**House Ways and Means Committee
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1:00 PM**

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The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 732 proposing to increase and expand the tobacco tax to both increase funding to tobacco cessation programs in Maryland and benefit the General Fund in ways that can be used to implement the new school funding formula our students and schools need.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for the careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Educators have joined efforts to support this expansion and increase as a matter of public health, student well-being, and to raise new targeted revenues. Considering the epidemic levels associated with the use of e-cigarettes among young people, expanding the definition of products regulated and taxed will help to reduce tobacco usage rates of students. Maryland has made great strides to reduce smoking rates and has saved lives and resources by increasing the tobacco tax a few times over the years.

MSEA also supports passage of an adequate, sustainable, predictable revenue stream that will adequately fund both the operating and construction costs of our public schools. A great public school for every child means our students have updated technology, small manageable classes, safe and modern schools, proper healthcare and nutrition, and have highly qualified and highly effective educators. The work of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education further recommends improvements to access to Pre-K and Career Technology Education, as well as expansion of the educator workforce and increased salaries to help deliver individualized instruction and recruit and retain the best workforce in the country.

The Kirwan Commission has determined that Maryland will need to invest substantially more resources into education for our citizens to become truly successful in the very competitive national and global economies. This is the time to be locating and allocating more resources to education, and HB 732 can be part of that dedicated funding solution. Our kids can't wait.

MSEA urges a favorable report of House Bill 732.