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Testimony for HB0732, Electronic Smoking Devices, Other Tobacco Products, and Cigarettes - Taxation and Regulation

Ways and Means Committee, sponsor: Majority Leader Eric Luedtke

Tuesday Feb 18th, 2020

POSITION: FAVORABLE

*Maryland PIRG is a state based, non-partisan, citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state and a student funded, student directed chapter at the University of Maryland College Park. For forty five years we've stood up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society. **That includes a long history of supporting evidence based solutions to reduce tobacco use.***

Maryland PIRG urges you to support legislation that would reduce the burden of tobacco related death and disease in our state by increasing the cigarette tax and establishing a parallel tax on all other tobacco products, as outlined in HB0732.

According to preliminary data from the Maryland Health Department's Youth Risk Behavior Survey & Youth Tobacco Survey 2018-2019, tobacco use--e-cigarette use especially--remains a problem among Maryland's high schoolers:

- 23% of Maryland high school students currently use electronic smoking devices (ESD), a rate 5 times higher than adult use.
- Maryland high school students currently smoke cigars at 6%, cigarettes at 5%, and smokeless tobacco at 4.6%.

E-cigarette use among young people has reached epidemic levels in Maryland. It's important to establish a tax that has parity across all tobacco products, as laid out in HB0732, so that we can reduce overall tobacco use, not just the use of one product.

If we want a future free from tobacco related death and disease, we need to address youth tobacco use. [Nearly 9 out of 10 cigarette smokers first try cigarettes by age 18. \[1\]](#)

Increasing the price of tobacco products makes it less likely that youth will use them in the first place, and more likely that they'll quit.

- [Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death and disease in the United States.](#)[2]
- [In Maryland, 7,500 adults die every year from causes attributed to tobacco use--that's roughly 20 loved ones, friends, and family members dying every day.](#) [3]
- Health care costs in Maryland directly caused by tobacco use amount to \$2.71 billion annually.[4]

A \$2.00 per pack increase in the cigarette tax in Maryland would prevent 17,500 youth under 18 years old from becoming adult smokers. It would result in 14,500 fewer premature deaths from smoking related diseases, and save more than a billion dollars in long term health care costs from smoking declines. [5]

HB0732 will prevent kids from getting dragged into a potentially life-long struggle with tobacco addiction, and all of the problems that come with it. We recommend a favorable report.

[1] CDC, *Youth and Tobacco Use*, accessed online 24 January, 2020,

https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/index.htm

[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Tobacco Use*, accessed online 24 January, 2020,

<https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/factsheets/tobacco.htm>

[3] Maryland Department of Health, *The Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control*, accessed online 24 January, 2020,

https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/ohpetup/pages/tob_home.aspx

[4] American Cancer Society CAN, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, and Tobacconomics, *New Revenues, Public Health Benefits, and Cost Savings from a \$2.00 cigarette tax increase in Maryland fact sheet*, accessed 24 January, 2020.

[5] Ibid.