



Testimony on HB134
Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition
Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Ricarra Jones, and I am the Political Director with 1199SEIU- the largest healthcare union in the nation, where we represent over 10,000 healthcare workers in Maryland. Given the need to ensure a healthier Maryland by eliminating the increased number of carcinogenic products in our communities, we are asking this Committee to support HB134- the Flavored Tobacco Products Prohibition.

All Marylanders deserve the opportunity to live a healthy lifestyle and in solidifying this effort, Maryland must prohibit the use of flavored tobacco products that have infiltrated our homes and even our schools. Studies find that tobacco products kill over 7,500 people in Maryland each year and to make matters even worse, our children are getting addicted to these products while they are in grade school. Tobacco companies do this by advertising tobacco products that attract the attention of both adults and adolescents by making smoking the “cool” thing to do. But the truth of the matter is that for children, smoking at an early age only reinforces disastrous health effects such as lung cancer and other respiratory problems later in life.

This same issue also harms members of 1199SEIU. Our members who come from majority-minority backgrounds are often systematically targeted to buy these products, just like many other minorities are targeted in communities across the state. These products are placed and sold in convenience stores, liquor stores, and other businesses in black and brown residential areas, where these groups already suffer from healthcare disparities. The state must intervene to ensure that the lives of our most marginalized citizens are protected and prohibiting the sale of tobacco products is one of the necessary steps to reach this goal.

For this reason, we believe that this prohibition will create the necessary safety net in place to save thousands of lives across the state of Maryland and ensures the betterment of health for many minority communities. With this in mind, we ask this Committee to please find HB134, favorable.

Respectfully,

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