

**Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 134
Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition**

**House Economic Matters Committee
February 10, 2021**

**Samantha Zwerling
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 134, which would end the sale of flavored tobacco products in Maryland. MSEA urges the committee to pass a clean bill that protects students and communities from a toxic product that kills 7,500 people in Maryland each year and is actively hooking an entirely new generation of kids.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland’s public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for 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 end teen use of flavored tobacco products as a matter of public health, student well-being, and good public policy. As recently as 2018, MSEA members renewed their support for “public policy that focuses on the prevention and treatment of substance abuse disorders” and “working with appropriate agencies to develop programs to end all types of substance abuse among students.” While the State had made strides in reducing youth tobacco use, e-cigarettes have undermined that progress and created a new youth tobacco epidemic. Last year, the National Education Association joined 50+ national organizations calling on Congress to pass the Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act of 2019, which would ban the sale of flavored products in the United States.

With youth tobacco usage on the rise, Maryland must act now. Flavors like fruit medley, pop rocks, and gummy bear attract teens and young people and hook them on these addictive products. These fun-sounding flavors mask the harmful effects of the e-cigarettes, which are sometimes more deadly than traditional tobacco products.

Maryland has made great strides to reduce smoking rates and has saved lives. It’s time to take the next step and safe-guard Maryland’s youth from these destructive products. **MSEA urges a Favorable Report on House Bill 134.**