



# Baltimore-Washington Conference

The United Methodist Church

REV. DR. STACEY COLE WILSON

EXECUTIVE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND SERVICE

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January 25, 2021

## **Testimony on SB 177 / HB 134** ***Fight Flavored Tobacco in Maryland***

### **Position: Favorable**

**Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church** (Advocacy and Action) supports SB 177/HB 134.

SB 177/HB 134 is legislation that would end the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Maryland, including electronic smoking devices, menthol cigarettes, flavored cigars, and smokeless tobacco. We urge passage of a bill without amendments, free from the type of regulatory loopholes Big Tobacco has exploited for decades.

Flavored tobacco products lure kids into a life-long struggle with deadly addiction, hooking them on products in flavors like minty menthol, glazed donut, gummy bear, and cotton candy.

For decades, the tobacco industry has targeted Black and Brown communities with their predatory marketing of flavored tobacco products, namely menthol cigarettes. As a result, a staggering 85 percent of all African American smokers smoke menthol cigarettes, resulting in a disproportionate burden of tobacco-related disease and death. African Americans are more likely to die from tobacco-related causes than any other race or ethnic group.

The United Methodist Church and its predecessor denominations have a long history of witness against the use and marketing of tobacco products. There is overwhelming evidence linking cigarette smoking/tobacco products with lung cancer, cardiovascular diseases, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and related illnesses. Alarming statistics point to the impact of tobacco companies and their marketing practices to entice people to smoke.

Furthermore, we are outraged by the use of marketing techniques aimed at young people (children, youths, and young adults) worldwide and legal mechanisms used by leading cigarette manufacturers to loosen regulations and reverse laws enacted by countries and US states to restrict tobacco marketing. These practices are in direct conflict with the global tobacco treaty, The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which outlines the most effective policy in controlling tobacco in the interest of public health.



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Thus, it is our moral and spiritual obligation to protect our children and vulnerable adults especially those who are lured by flavored substances that are detrimental to their health, academic and personal success.

The Faith & Community Against Flavored Tobacco coalition's mission is to stop Big Tobacco from targeting Maryland's children and Black and Brown communities.

To protect the health and futures of Maryland's youth, we must end the sale of **all** flavored tobacco products in Maryland. [Urge Maryland legislators to vote yes on SB 177 and HB 134.](#) Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Stacey Cole Wilson

Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church