



**Olivia Bartlett, Co-Lead, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team**

**Committee:** Economic Matters

**Testimony on:** HB0134 – Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** February 9, 2021

**Bill Contact:** Delegate Jazz Lewis

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 2500 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Poolesville east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep all the members of our communities healthy and safe in a clean environment. DTMG strongly supports HB0134 because prohibiting flavored tobacco and vaping products will go a long way toward reducing smoking by adults as well as young people and will result in a healthier society.

I was a scientist at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) for 16 years. According to the NCI, use of tobacco products remains the leading preventable cause of death and disability in the United States, with almost 84% of lung cancer deaths among men and 81% of those among women attributed to tobacco smoking. Smoking also contributes to heart disease and chronic respiratory diseases. Racial/ethnic minority groups and low-income populations are disproportionately affected by smoking-related illnesses.

Research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has shown conclusively that fruit and candy flavored tobacco and vaping products attract young people. A 2018 study by the CDC that found that 67% of high school students and 49% of middle school students who used tobacco products in the prior 30 days reported using a flavored tobacco product during that time. The FDA found that first use of a flavored tobacco product was associated with continued use of tobacco. Multiple studies showed that youth aged 12-17 and young adults aged 18-24 cited flavors as a major reason for e-cigarette use, as well as for use of hookahs, cigars, menthol cigarettes, and smokeless tobacco. 81 percent of youth and 86 percent of young adults who ever used tobacco reported that the first tobacco product they used was flavored. Additionally, youth who initiate smoking with menthol cigarettes may be at greater risk for progression to established smoking and subsequent nicotine dependence than youth who initiate with nonmenthol cigarettes. Furthermore, adults who reported that the first tobacco product they used was flavored had a 32 percent higher prevalence of current tobacco product use.

HB0134 will address this growing problem by prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products and e-cigarettes that taste or smell of fruit, menthol, mint, wintergreen, chocolate, cocoa, vanilla, honey, a

candy, a dessert, an alcoholic beverage, an herb, or a spice. The prohibition will be enforced and violators will be fined.

Big tobacco companies have circulated misinformation about the benefits of flavored tobacco and e-cigarette products. However, while there is some anecdotal evidence that these products could help some addicted adult smokers switch from cigarettes to potentially less harmful forms of nicotine delivery, FDA has not found conclusive scientific evidence for this assertion. Menthol cigarettes are a favorite among young people and many minorities, and their availability will encourage more people to begin smoking and to continue smoking.

Vape shops have complained that prohibition of flavored products will decrease their business. That may be true. However, the science clearly shows that the flavored products they sell are harmful to the public and should be removed.

Therefore, DTMG strongly supports HB0134 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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