



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association

To the Economic Matters Committee

February 10, 2021

House Bill 134 Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Davis, Vice Chair Dumais, Delegate J. Lewis, and members of the Economic Matters Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 134 Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition.

This legislation provides certain licenses to manufacture, sell, buy, and store cigarettes, other tobacco products, and electronic smoking devices but does not authorize the licensee to, or to attempt to, manufacture, ship, import, or sell into or within the State a flavored tobacco product. MRHA supports this prohibition of the sale of flavored tobacco products to protect the health of all Marylanders, especially rural Marylanders.

Data published by the Maryland Rural Health Plan (www.mdruralhealthplan.org) shows that many rural communities suffer from higher than state average adult and youth tobacco use. Limiting the sale of these addictive tobacco products would greatly benefit rural communities and beyond.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

And while Maryland is one of the richest states, there is great disparity in how wealth is distributed. The greatest portion of wealth resides around the Baltimore/Washington Region; while further away from the I-95 corridor, differences in the social and economic environment are very apparent.

MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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