

Deborah Rivkin
Vice President
Government Affairs – Maryland

CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield
1501 S. Clinton Street, Suite 700
Baltimore, MD 21224-5744
Tel. 410-528-7054
Fax 410-528-7981



HB 134 – Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition

Position: Support

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments in support of House Bill 134. This emergency bill prohibits the manufacture, shipment, import, or sale of flavored tobacco products within the State. CareFirst is focused on driving the transformation of health care for the better, and we are committed to improving the health of our members and communities. House Bill 134 advances our mission by prohibiting harmful products that disproportionately impact the health of our citizens.

- The growing youth use of e-cigarettes and other nicotine devices poses a serious public health threat. Research has shown that vaping can harm the heart and lungs, and that e-cigarettes are just as addictive as traditional cigarettes. The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) recent actions to limit flavors and restrict the places in which e-cigarettes are sold are a good first step to address this emerging crisis.
- Over 5 million high school-aged youth have used e-cigarettes nationwide in 2019 and there are significant disparities in tobacco product use in youth by race and ethnicity.
 - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that mentholated and flavored tobacco products have been targeted heavily with marketing toward minority populations, especially African American communities. Consequently, over 7 out of 10 African American youth ages 12-17 years who smoke use menthol cigarettes. African American adults also have the highest percentage of menthol cigarette use - 85.8%, compared to 46% of Hispanic smokers, 39% of Asian smokers, and 28.7% of White smokers.

CareFirst believes that this legislation will keep more Marylanders from using flavored tobacco products, help them quit, and live higher quality and healthier lives. We look forward to working with legislators, public health groups and other partners to help ensure that children are protected from harmful products, while continuing efforts to help current smokers quit.

We urge a favorable report.

About CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield

In its 83rd year of service, CareFirst, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, is a not-for-profit healthcare company which, through its affiliates and subsidiaries, offers a comprehensive portfolio of health insurance products and administrative services to 3.4 million individuals and employers in Maryland, the District of Columbia and Northern Virginia. In 2019, CareFirst invested \$43 million to improve overall health, and increase the accessibility, affordability, safety and quality of healthcare throughout its market areas. To learn more about CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, visit our website at www.carefirst.com and our transforming healthcare page at www.carefirst.com/transformation, or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Instagram](#).