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January 26, 2021

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

Position: Favorable

Dr. Alvin C. Hathaway, Senior Pastor, Union Baptist Church 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.

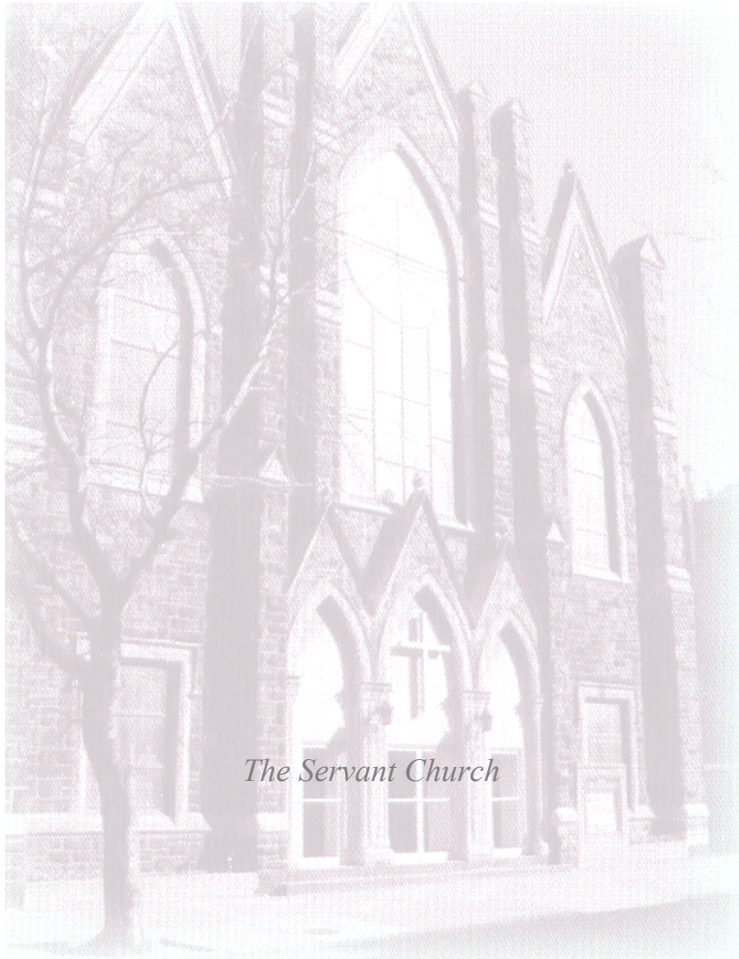
Tobacco advertising lured me as a young Boy Scout to get an adult to buy me a pack of Kool cigarettes. Why, I wanted to be cool. My patrol was excited when I passed them cigarettes to smoke late at night in our tent, when we were supposed to be asleep. I lit the cigarettes and began to puff. As we puffed we coughed. Our lung intuitively were rejected the smoke we were inhaling. Our Scout Master came to the tent and asked what were we doing. Between coughs it was clear. He did something that changed my life. He told us that since you want to smoke them, eat them. As a result of that experience I have never smoked a cigarette again in my life. Now, I'm thankful for that lesson, because as a child, I didn't realize advertising was seeking to lure me into a habit that would have been difficult and costly to break. Youth must be protected from advertising and smoking that will impact the quality of their health.

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

Sincerely,

Alvin C. Hathaway, Sr.

Dr. Alvin C. Hathaway, Sr.
Senior Pastor



The Servant Church