

January 26, 2021

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

**Position: Favorable**

Nabeehah Azeez 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.

I am a resident in the 40th Legislative District and I am active in my community in various ways. I sit on the governing board of the Muslim Community Cultural Center of Baltimore located in the 41st District. I work as the Operations Manager at No Boundaries Coalition Inc. I also am a board member at Communities United, Baltimore Peoples Climate Movement, StepUp Maryland and I am a member of the executive leadership of the Baltimore City Branch of the NAACP.

Through my various community endeavors I have come across many community members who are tobacco users with no plans of quitting as well as tobacco users fighting their addiction every day. I support this legislation because it seeks to disrupt the cycle of tobacco addiction without criminalizing smokers or the use of tobacco. The sale & marketing of flavored tobacco products primarily targets our community's most valuable citizens, our youth! As we know peer pressure is a real thing that our youth will have to combat throughout their lives. By passing this legislation we will be limiting the temptations before our youth to engage in the use of tobacco products. We will be addressing the issue of juvenile tobacco use at the root of the problem. Also, we will not be criminalizing our community members who already have fallen victim to the use of tobacco products. This legislation does not put the blame on community members. It instead allows legislators to say "This ends today!"

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. I Urge Maryland legislators to vote yes on SB 177 and HB 134.

Sincerely,



Nabeehah Azeez

Active Resident in the 40th Legislative District