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January 26, 2021

Dear Chair Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland Pod of Parents Against Vaping and e-cigarettes (PAVe) and as a resident of Bethesda, Maryland, I am writing to strongly urge your support of SB 177 - "Business Regulation - Flavored Tobacco Products - Prohibition" without amendments.

Big Tobacco has targeted and exploited our communities for far too long, leading Marylanders to lifelong struggles with addiction and disease. They are deceitful and manipulative, now using **flavored products** to target **youth** through trendy advertising in print and digital media including Instagram, and even on educational websites like Quizlet. The thousands of flavored offerings including products like minty menthol, gummy bear, and cotton candy, effectively mask the bitter taste of nicotine and hook kids. Even leaving one flavor, like menthol, on the market is dangerous because research shows that kids will use whatever flavor is available. They don't like the taste of nicotine.

Electronic smoking devices known as e-cigarettes or vapes deliver massive doses of nicotine through a product that tastes good, is easy to inhale, and is highly addictive. In fact, one vape contains as much nicotine as an entire pack of combustible cigarettes. **We know that 80% of young people who have ever used tobacco started with a flavored product and 23% of Maryland high school students**

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currently use e-cigarettes - a rate 5 times higher than adults, and 4% higher than the national average.

Furthermore, the dangers from vaping flavored nicotine products to the teen's developing brain and developing lungs are numerous including attention, learning, memory, anxiety, depression, and mood swings, worsening asthma, and chronic lung disease.

The end of flavored tobacco sales is also a social justice issue. Big Tobacco has used this playbook before by predatorily targeting Black and Brown communities through menthol cigarette advertising, product discounts, and giveaways. **As a result, the amount of African American smokers who smoke menthol jumped from 5% in 1952 to about 85% today.** Like other flavored products, menthol hides the harsh taste of tobacco, making it easier for people to smoke. It reduces irritation, which allows people to inhale larger amounts deeper and longer, increasing nicotine intake and its addictive qualities.

Black and Brown people in particular are susceptible to addiction because nicotine is stored in tissues that contain melanin, the substance that gives color to our skin. The darker the skin of a person, the more nicotine is stored in their body. This has led to a devastating and disproportionate burden of suffering in Black and Brown communities.

The sale of flavored tobacco products undeniably increases the suffering of Black and Brown communities as well as the prevalence of youth addiction to tobacco products. It is preventable. For all of the above reasons, **I urge you to support the passage of a clean SB 177**

- “Business Regulation - Flavored Tobacco Products - Prohibition.”

We are most grateful for your time and attention to this grave and highly consequential matter. The time to act is now.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julie Mendel Reinhard,
PAVe, Maryland Pod Advocate

