

January 26, 2021

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

Position: Favorable

Arianna Koudounas 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.

When my dad was in the military, he became hooked on cigarettes due to the free cartons provided to each soldier, so clearly aimed at getting the next generation addicted. Big Tobacco is ruthless. I live in a community full of Black and Brown people with asthma. Smoking does tremendous harm to all bodies, especially young bodies that are still developing. So why on earth would we encourage the sale of products that make smoking more appealing, especially for our youth? Save our children, save our communities – support SB 177/HB 134.

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 and HB 134.

Sincerely,
Arianna Koudounas
Resident of Madison Park, Baltimore City, Maryland