

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 177
Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products

To: Hon. Delores Kelley, Chair and members of the Senate Finance Committee

From: Gino Renne, President, UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO, International Vice President, UFCW

Dear Chairman Kelley and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

On behalf of the members of UFCW Local 1994 MCGEO I am writing in support of SB 177 - "Business Regulation - Flavored Tobacco Products - Prohibition" and ask that you ban this toxic product that kills 7,500 people in Maryland each year.

A review of internal industry documents found that tobacco companies designed flavored products particularly to appeal to young and novice smokers and have marketed their products by advertising on digital media platforms such as Instagram.

There are currently over 15,000 flavored nicotine products including mint or menthol, gummy bear, cotton candy, and many others. Flavors like "Pop Tartz" and strawberry shortcake are readily available and are highly attractive to young people.

We know that 80% of young people who have ever used tobacco started with a flavored product and 23% of Maryland high school students currently use e-cigarettes - a rate 5 times higher than adults. Even though there is currently an age restriction to purchase these products, clearly kids are still getting their hands on them given the rates of use.

According to the CDC, smoking related illness in the United States costs more than \$300 billion each year. We see those same impacts to our union healthcare plans. But beyond the issue of cost, I look forward to the day when we will not bury another member who died prematurely because of smoking.

It is past time that we truly prioritize public health and stop companies from making and marketing these products. On behalf of our more than 8000 members and their families, I ask for a **favorable** report on SB 177 - "Business Regulation - Flavored Tobacco Products - Prohibition."