



## **Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association**

To the Finance Committee

January 28, 2021

Senate Bill 177 Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition

### **POSITION: SUPPORT**

Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, Senator Washington, and members of the Finance Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 177 Business Regulation – Flavored Tobacco Products – Prohibition.

This legislation provides certain licenses to manufacture, sell, buy, and store cigarettes, other tobacco products, and electronic smoking devices but does not authorize the licensee to, or to attempt to, manufacture, ship, import, or sell into or within the State a flavored tobacco product. MRHA supports this prohibition of the sale of flavored tobacco products to protect the health of all Marylanders.

MRHA's mission is to educate and advocate for the optimal health and wellness of rural communities and their residents. Membership is comprised of health departments, hospitals, community health centers, health professionals, and community members in rural Maryland.

Rural Maryland represents almost 80 percent of Maryland's land area and 25% of its population. Of Maryland's 24 counties, 18 are considered rural by the state, and with a population of over 1.6 million they differ greatly from the urban areas in the state.

Maryland law states that "many rural communities in the State face a host of difficult challenges relating to persistent unemployment, poverty, changing technological and economic conditions, an aging population and an out-migration of youth, inadequate access to quality housing, health care and other services, and deteriorating or inadequate transportation, communications, sanitations, and economic development infrastructure." (West's Annotated Code of Maryland, State Finance and Procurement § 2-207.8b)

And while Maryland is one of the richest states, there is great disparity in how wealth is distributed. The greatest portion of wealth resides around the Baltimore/Washington Region; while further away from the I-95 corridor, differences in the social and economic environment are very apparent.

MHRA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we thank you for your consideration.

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