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February 20, 2024

House Economic Matters Committee
The Honorable Chair C.T. Wilson
Room 231
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: House Bill 1180: Cigarettes, Other Tobacco Products, and Electronic Smoking Devices - Revisions (Tobacco Retail Modernization Act of 2024) –

POSITION: Favorable

Dear Chair Wilson and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

On behalf of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, my name is Kristin Jimison, and I am here today in full SUPPORT of HB 1180: The Tobacco Retail Modernization Act of 2024 (“TRMA”).

We want to thank Chairman Wilson for his leadership on this effort. We appreciate the Chairman for meeting with us in the interim to discuss how we might approach reducing the harms of tobacco use on Maryland children, and very much appreciate his support and sponsorship of HB 1180.

We believe this bill offers common sense strategies for Maryland to reduce accessibility of tobacco products for kids in Maryland and to hold bad actors accountable for making products available to children. The bill also simply aligns with federal law in several instances. We look forward to working with the sponsor and other stakeholders should they have any suggestions to strengthen the bill.

Despite decades of progress in reducing smoking rates, kids are still accessing and using tobacco products, including e-cigarettes in Maryland. Today over 48,000 Maryland high school students self-report using tobacco products. We have heard from countless teachers and students that vaping, in particular, is a tremendous problem in schools.

With tobacco companies continuing to market to a new generation of lifelong customers, we cannot rest on past progress, or risk backsliding as new products and new marketing strategies continue to attract kids to tobacco use. In fact, the tobacco industry spends \$8.6 billion annually in marketing - that’s nearly one million dollars per hour, with more than \$95 million directly targeted at Marylanders.

The tobacco industry relentlessly targets our kids and other vulnerable communities. We need every tool possible to counter illicit sales and enforce tobacco laws. TRMA provides funding and tools to help Maryland’s tobacco enforcement agencies hold bad actors accountable and limit the ability for kids to access tobacco products. It also ensures that we have current and accurate data to make informed future policy improvements.

With each year that passes, our *youth* tobacco crisis becomes an ongoing *adult* tobacco crisis and creates another \$3.14 billion in annual Maryland healthcare costs directly caused by smoking. The toll of human suffering is considerable. In fact, 27.5% of cancer deaths in Maryland are attributable to smoking.

A vast majority of Marylanders understand continued action must be taken, and support doing so: A recent poll conducted by OpinionWorks found that 81% of Maryland likely voters support taking further action to prevent the sale of tobacco to our kids.

The TRMA is a vitally important part of the long-term solution. It strengthens existing Maryland Law in three key areas:
Licensing Reform

- Increase the tobacco retailer license fee and use those funds to pay for enforcement activities.

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- Increase penalty for sales to minors, authorize courts to temporarily suspend retail licenses for repeat violations, and offer the ability for courts to revoke licenses for especially bad actors.

Limiting Youth Access to Tobacco

- Adopt best practices including sale-to-minors audits, prohibiting sales in pharmacies, and restricting sales of e-cigs/vapes to specially licensed dealers.

Youth Tobacco Access and E-Cigarette Study

- Study issues related to youth tobacco access and e-cig use, including mapping current retail license density and proximity to schools and healthcare facilities, and the public health impact to young people of tobacco and e-cig/vape use.

These points of progress will help protect the health and future of our kids and prepare Maryland to win the war against tobacco-related addiction, disease and death.

For these reasons, The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids supports the TRMA and urges a favorable report from the Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristin Jimison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kristin Jimison

Director of Advocacy, Mid-Atlantic Region