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HB0238

February 20, 2024

TO: Members of the Houe Economic Matters Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: House Bill 238 – Public Health - Clean Indoor Air Act - Revisions

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 238.

HB 238 expands the state's "Clean Indoor Air Act," which prohibits smoking indoors in most locations, to include the smoking of electronic smoking devices ("e-cigarettes" or "vapes"), cannabis, and hemp. Smoking and second-hand vapor from electronic smoking devices have significant negative health implications, especially for children and pregnant people. Updating the Clean Indoor Air Act to prohibit vaping and smoking cannabis in public indoor spaces will help reduce exposure to harmful substances including nicotine, cancer causing chemicals, and ultrafine particles that can cause lung irritation and worsen asthma symptoms.

As of 2021 (the most recent year for which data is available), nearly 15% of Maryland high schoolers reported regularly using e-cigarettes.ⁱ This has concerning implications not only for the young smokers, but also for those around them: like tobacco and cannabis smoke, exhaled vapor from e-cigarettes can linger in an enclosed space, thereby exposing others to harmful chemicals and particulate matter.ⁱⁱ Research shows that exposure to secondhand cannabis and tobacco smoke, as well as aerosols from vapes, plays a critical role in the development and severity of asthma in children.ⁱⁱⁱ Asthma is a significant health burden for Maryland residents, with almost a quarter of state high schoolers diagnosed with the condition.^{iv} This number is even higher in Baltimore City, where one-third of City high schoolers have asthma.ⁱⁱ Baltimore City residents also have an alarming rate of asthma-related emergency department visits, at 173 per 10,000 people, compared to a national average of 42 per 10,000 people.^{v,vi} Exacerbated or poorly controlled asthma can greatly hamper children's lives, causing them to miss out on school attendance, sports and physical activity, and more.

Pregnant people and infants are also disproportionately harmed by secondhand cannabis and tobacco smoke and vape aerosol exposure. According to the CDC, infants exposed to secondhand

tobacco smoke are more likely to die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Exposure to smoke for pregnant people increases the likelihood of giving birth prematurely and giving birth to babies with lower birth weights, both of which increases newborns' risk of additional health complications and even death.^{vii,viii} This is important to note because cannabis smoke contains the many of the toxic chemicals found in tobacco smoke.^{ix} Additionally, research shows that THC, the mind-altering component of cannabis, may be passed to infants through secondhand smoke.^x

Protecting the lives and health of residents is of critical importance to Baltimore City government. By updating the Clean Air Act, this bill will help protect public health by reducing Marylanders' exposure to harmful chemicals and particles that can lead to serious health concerns. For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 238.

ⁱ Maryland Department of Health. (2022). 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results. Retrieved from <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/ccdpc/Documents/2021MDH%20Summary%20Tables.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Shearston, J. A., Eazor, J., Lee, L., Vilcassim, M. J. R., Reed, T. A., Ort, D., Weitzman, M., & Gordon, T. (2023). Effects of electronic cigarettes and hookah (waterpipe) use on home air quality. *Tobacco control*, 32(1), 36–41. <https://doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2020-056437>

ⁱⁱⁱ Ogbu CE, Ogbu SC, Khadka D, Kirby RS. Childhood Asthma and Smoking: Moderating Effect of Preterm Status and Birth Weight. *Cureus*. 2021 Apr 17;13(4):e14536. doi: 10.7759/cureus.14536. PMID: 34017652; PMCID: PMC8128281.

^{iv} Maryland Department of Health. (n.d.) Youth Risk Behavior Survey/Youth Tobacco Survey (YRBS/YTS) 2018 - 2019. Retrieved from <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/ccdpc/Reports/Pages/YRBS2018.aspx>

^v Maryland Department of Health. (2023). Emergency Department (ED) Visits for Asthma. Retrieved from <https://maps.health.maryland.gov/ephtportal/asthma/status/EDRates#close/>

^{vi} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). Asthma Emergency Department Visits 2010–2018. Retrieved from [https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/asthma_stats/asthma-ed-visits_2010-2018.html#:~:text=Asthma%20emergency%20department%20\(ED\)%20visits%20rate*%20\(per%2010%2C000,than%20among%20men%20\(31.1\).](https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/asthma_stats/asthma-ed-visits_2010-2018.html#:~:text=Asthma%20emergency%20department%20(ED)%20visits%20rate*%20(per%2010%2C000,than%20among%20men%20(31.1).)

^{vii} Rang, N. N., Hien, T. Q., Chanh, T. Q., & Thuyen, T. K. (2020). Preterm birth and secondhand smoking during pregnancy: A case-control study from Vietnam. *PloS one*, 15(10), e0240289. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0240289>

^{viii} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022). Health Problems Caused by Secondhand Smoke. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/secondhand-smoke/health.html>

^{ix} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). Marijuana and Public Health: Lung Health. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/lung-health.html>

^x Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). Marijuana and Public Health: Pregnancy. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/health-effects/pregnancy.html>