

TFK Testimony

Dear Chairman Wilson,

As a Baltimore City resident, student, and youth advocate my name is Michelle Law, I'm writing to you to let you know that I support HB 1180, the Tobacco Retail Modernization Act of 2024. I support this bill because of the many experiences I have regarding the consumption of tobacco products.

Something I had never expected to do was to be sharing my story about vaping. It started innocently enough, just another trend among high schoolers, like slime and fidget spinners. Before high school, I had no idea what vapes even were let alone know someone who even used them, but soon enough, more and more people started to use them. They were typically used by the "cool kids," and I quickly found myself witnessing them vaping wherever I went.

It went beyond being a trend but an obsessive addiction. As if they couldn't stand to spend even a few hours without vaping, where I even saw kids request to leave class to sneak away to vape in the restroom. It has become such a normal thing that I see students vaping everywhere and even multiple times where I overheard people teaching others how to vape while I was using the restroom and had to pretend I didn't hear them.

But let me tell you, vaping is not just a fun harmless thing. It's as bad as smoking, drugs, or alcohol if not worse. The temptation of different flavors and unique designs may seem harmless, but it's a trap. Peer pressure and the constant growth of the vape industry creates a dangerous cycle of addiction and other issues. Most importantly, especially the health risks—which are real, and they're often forgotten when youth just want to fit in.

Another thing that's concerning is how silent vaping can be, especially from parents. The harmful long-term health effects are frequently overlooked. The fact that vape usage is often kept secret from parents creates even more concerns. Vaping is not cheap, and people who vape need to spend their money on other things that can help them and not spend it on something that can potentially put their lives in danger. So, it is crucial that these issues be recognized and that the dangers of smoking and vaping are made clear. Action is needed.

