

Tree House Project, Inc.

Delegate C.T. Wilson
Economic Matters Committee, Chairman
Lowe House Office Building, Room 231
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

February 21, 2025

RE: HB 1241 - Other Tobacco Products and Electronic Smoking Devices - Seizure and Wholesaler Licensure Requirements

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Wilson,

I am writing to you as a youth organizer, student and peer mentor living in Baltimore, Maryland, to express my support for HB 1241. I support this bill because I do not think young people like myself should have access to tobacco products like e-cigarettes. I know some of my peers who are able to purchase e-cigarettes and are attracted to e-cigarettes because of the type of advertisement they have. Some of my peers do not understand that it will have a long term impact on their life and health. So, I advocate to help them understand and to bring awareness. I am especially grateful to the Chairman of this committee for his historic support of legislation protecting our youth from tobacco, to Delegate Amprey for his sponsorship of this legislation in the House, and to Chairwoman Beidle for her sponsorship of this legislation in the Senate.

Despite progress in tobacco control, the problem of youth access to tobacco products, particularly e-cigarettes, remains significant. Data indicates that over 48,000 Maryland high school students self-report that they use tobacco products, a number that likely falls short of the true total. The marketing strategies and new products like flavored e-cigarettes target and hook kids, Big Tobacco's next generation of customers.

The impact of youth tobacco use is both a public health and economic burden. Maryland

incurs annual healthcare costs of approximately \$3.14 billion directly related to smoking,

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and 27.5% cancer-related Maryland deaths can be traced to tobacco use. We must act now to mitigate its influence on the health of our children and our communities at large.

HB 1241 proposes to grant the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Cannabis Commission the same seizure powers over e-cigarettes that it already has over other tobacco products like cigarettes, to make uniform the Commission's oversight and enforcement authority across the tobacco market. The legislation also brings e-cigarettes in line with regulations for other tobacco products, notably by requiring records keeping for the sale of e-cigarettes. These steps are crucial for ensuring the same healthcare and public health strategies and enforcement that protect Maryland's youth from products like cigarettes are also available for e-cigarettes.

The need for this legislation is broadly recognized. In 2024, polling showed eighty-one percent of Maryland voters supported action against Big Tobacco to safeguard our children. I urge you to vote in favor of HB 1241, and continue your strong track record of protecting our children from the dangers of tobacco.

Thank you for your consideration and for taking a stand with me.

Sincerely,

Khayia Brown

Youth Organizer & Peer Mentor