

Senator Pam Beidle
Finance Committee, Chairman
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

February 24, 2025

RE: SB 842 - Other Tobacco Products and Electronic Smoking Devices - Seizure and Wholesaler Licensure Requirements

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairwoman Beidle,

I am writing to you as a Deacon, serving in Baltimore City, to express my support for SB842, and thank you for your leadership in sponsoring this bill. I support this bill because our church believes that our community should be physically and spiritually healthy.

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

As you know, SB842 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 your committee to vote in favor of SB 842, 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,

Aaron Henry, Member of the Diaconate Board
New Bethlehem Baptist Church