



Testimony House Bill 870
House Health and Government and Operations Committee
February 19, 2025
Support

Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice-Chair Cullison and Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on House Bill 870 – Tobacco Product Manufacturers Escrow Act – Alterations sponsored by Delegate Rosenberg. The American Lung Association supports this bill as it would ensure all manufacturers of cigarettes who sell their products in Maryland are paying their fair share while making important additional investments in tobacco control and prevention programs.

The American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease, through research, education, and advocacy. The work of the American Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer; to improve the air we breathe; to reduce the burden of lung disease on individuals and their families; and to eliminate tobacco use and tobacco-related diseases.

In the recent release of the American Lung Association's [State of Tobacco Control](#), it was noted that the funding for Maryland's Tobacco Control and Prevention program at approximately \$23 million is (inclusive of approximately \$1.7 million of federal CDC funds) woefully lower than the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommended level of \$48 million, at 47.9%. The Lung Association strongly support protecting and increasing this funding especially considering the high levels of youth use of electronic smoking devices and the need to develop educational programs and outreach to prevent youth from initiating tobacco use and encourage current smokers to quit and not switch.

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, killing an estimated 490,000 Americans and [7,500 Marylanders](#) each year.¹ The American Lung Association supports funding of evidence-based tobacco prevention, education and cessation programs. These programs should focus their efforts on the populations most disproportionately impacted by tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure.

In data from the [2024 National Tobacco Youth Survey](#), tobacco use among high school and middle school students continue to show at high levels with more than 2.25 million youth using a tobacco product. The report also shows that 1.63 million youth are still vaping, and over 25% are vaping daily which indicates a very high addiction rate. In [Maryland](#), 23% of high school students use an electronic smoking device. Nearly 90% of the youth survey respondents reported using flavored e-cigarettes including mint and menthol. Flavored tobacco products remain the primary gateway for youth addiction. The tobacco industry has continued to target youth users with marketing of flavored tobacco products which makes them appealing to youth, with many of them not realizing that these products contain nicotine. We are continuing to see an onslaught of new products enter the market, such as nicotine pouches which come in flavors designed to attract youth. As a result, we are setting our kids up for a lifetime of addiction and losing the opportunity for the first tobacco-free generation.

An important tool in fighting tobacco use in Maryland is the tobacco control and prevention program funding which comes from the Cigarette Restitution Fund. As part of the original 1998 tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) certain cigarette manufacturers chose not to join the MSA and therefore Maryland receives no direct payments or compensation from those companies. House Bill 870 ensures that all manufacturers of cigarettes who sell their products in Maryland are paying their part by requiring them to make payments to the state. House Bill 870 also makes important additional investments in the tobacco prevention and control program at the Maryland Department of Health.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the health and wellbeing of the residents of Maryland, we urge you to support House Bill 870 and encourage a favorable report from committee.

Sincerely,



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¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Eliminating Tobacco-Related Disease and Death: Addressing Disparities—A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2024.