



March 2, 2026

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama
Chair, House Economic Matters Committee
230 Taylor House Office Building
231 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 918 – Baltimore City – Cigarettes, Other Tobacco Products, and Electronic Smoking Devices – Local Laws Authorization

Dear Chair Valderrama:

The Maryland State Council on Cancer Control (Council) respectfully submits this letter of support for House Bill 918 (HB 918), which would authorize Baltimore City to enact and enforce local laws regulating the sale and distribution of cigarettes, other tobacco products, and electronic smoking devices, subject to certain limitations under State law.

Supporting Local Public Health Authority

Local governments play a critical role in protecting public health and responding to the specific needs of their communities. HB 918 would provide limited local authority to Baltimore City to regulate tobacco and electronic smoking products in ways that are at least as stringent as State law, while preserving the State’s role in licensing and taxation. This approach appropriately balances statewide consistency with local flexibility.

Tobacco Use and Cancer Prevention

Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of cancer and cancer-related death. Policies that reduce access to and exposure to tobacco products—particularly combustible tobacco and emerging electronic smoking devices—are central to comprehensive cancer prevention efforts. Allowing local jurisdictions to adopt evidence-informed tobacco control strategies can support reductions in tobacco use, initiation, and associated cancer risk.

Addressing Community-Specific Needs

Baltimore City faces unique public health challenges related to tobacco use and related disparities. Local authority enables municipalities to respond to patterns of use, product availability, and community impact in ways that complement statewide efforts. HB 918 provides Baltimore City with the ability to tailor public health interventions while remaining aligned with Maryland’s broader tobacco control framework.

Advancing Comprehensive Cancer Control

The Council supports policies that strengthen Maryland’s comprehensive cancer control efforts through prevention, risk reduction, and health equity. By permitting Baltimore City to enact local



tobacco control measures, HB 918 supports a multi-level public health approach that can contribute to reducing Maryland's cancer morbidity and mortality burden.

For these reasons, the Maryland State Council on Cancer Control supports HB 918 and respectfully urges the House Economic Matters Committee to give the bill favorable consideration.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to public health and cancer prevention in Maryland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Taofeek Owonikoko". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "O".

Taofeek Owonikoko, MD
Chair
Maryland State Council on Cancer Control