



March 20, 2026

Testimony of Laura Hale  
American Heart Association

**Favorable SB 249 Tobacco Product Licensees - Additional Licensure for Electronic Smoking Devices**

Dear Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian and Honorable Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

Thank you for your time and consideration on this important legislation for heart health. My name is Laura Hale and I am the Director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association. The American Heart Association extends its support Senate Bill 249.

Strong retail licensure requirements are a proven way to prevent and limit youth use of tobacco products<sup>1</sup>. By adding the requirement to hold the ESD license will help the Department in getting a stronger sense on what is being sold across the state and help in conducting compliance checks. This will also help in maintaining the checks that are tied to federal compliance under the SYNAR program. SYNAR provides block grants to the state of Maryland that we can (and have in the past) lose for lack of compliance for selling to people under 21.

Places with stronger retail licensure requirements have lower rates of cigarette and e-cigarette use and initiation among both youth and young adults<sup>2</sup>. This bill strengthens the retail licensure requirements in the state in proven effective ways that are key for tobacco control and are good business practices for the state.

The American Heart Association urges a favorable report on this legislation.

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<sup>1</sup> Astor, R.L., Urman, R., Barrington-Trimis, J.L., Berhane, K., Steinberg, J., Cousineau, M., Leventhal, A.M., Unger, J.B., Cruz, T., Pentz, M., Samet, J.M., & McConnell, R. (2019). Tobacco Retail Licensing and Youth Product Use. *Pediatrics*, 143 (2), Article e20173536. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2017-3536>

<sup>2</sup> Source: Astor, R.L., Urman, R., Barrington-Trimis, J.L., Berhane, K., Steinberg, J., Cousineau, M., Leventhal, A.M., Unger, J.B., Cruz, T., Pentz, M., Samet, J.M., & McConnell, R. (2019). Tobacco Retail Licensing and Youth Product Use. *Pediatrics*, 143 (2), Article e20173536. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2017-3536>