



Senate Bill 623

Retail Tobacco Businesses and Establishment of a Premium Cigar Lounge Alcoholic Beverages License (Maryland Premium Cigar Lounge Act of 2026)

February 25, 2026

Position: **OPPOSE**

Madame Chair and Members of the Finance Committee:

The Restaurant Association of Maryland opposes Senate Bill 623, which would allow for a premium cigar lounge liquor license.

Many of our restaurant bars accommodated smoking customers before Maryland's Clean Indoor Air Act became law in 2008. Given that the General Assembly banned smoking in indoor areas open to the public, including establishments that sell/serve alcohol and other workplaces, it would be unfair to subsequently allow alcohol to be sold/served at establishments where smoking is allowed under the retail tobacco business exemption of the Clean Indoor Air Act.

As the bill is drafted, it is unclear whether other local liquor laws/regulations would also apply to these licensees, or whether a local liquor board could deny such a license application.

And if such a licensed premium cigar lounge was allowed to have pool tables, a jukebox, or other entertainment, it would essentially be the same type of operation as a bar before smoking was banned.

We recently learned that this bill is likely to be amended. We hope to work with the bill sponsors and other stakeholders to address our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melvin R. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is followed by a long horizontal line.

Melvin R. Thompson
Senior Vice President