



February 27, 2026

The Honorable Heather Bagnall
Chair, Health Committee
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 1264 Public Health - Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Tobacco Cessation

Dear Chair Bagnall:

The Maryland State Council on Cancer Control (Council) respectfully submits this letter of support for House Bill 1264 (HB 1264), which would require the Maryland Medical Assistance Program, subject to budget limitations and federal law, to provide individual and group tobacco cessation counseling and would prohibit prior authorization requirements for tobacco cessation products and services.

HB 1264 represents a critical and evidence-based step toward reducing tobacco use, preventing cancer, and improving health outcomes for Maryland residents who rely on Medicaid coverage.

Strengthening Access to Evidence-Based Tobacco Cessation Services

Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of cancer incidence and cancer-related mortality. Comprehensive tobacco cessation services—including behavioral counseling and pharmacotherapy—are well established as the most effective approach to helping individuals quit successfully. HB 1264 strengthens Maryland’s tobacco control framework by ensuring Medicaid enrollees have access to both individual and group counseling, services that are proven to improve quit rates and long-term abstinence.

Removing Barriers That Undermine Quit Attempts

Prior authorization requirements create unnecessary delays and administrative barriers that can disrupt quit attempts at the moment individuals are most motivated to stop using tobacco. HB 1264 appropriately removes these barriers by prohibiting prior authorization for tobacco cessation products and services, allowing clinicians and cessation providers to respond immediately to patient readiness.

Supporting Face-to-Face Counseling and Community-Based Support

Research consistently demonstrates that face-to-face tobacco cessation counseling, including one-on-one coaching and group-based interventions, improves quit success - particularly when combined with pharmacotherapy. In-person and group-based services provide accountability, peer support, skill-building, and culturally responsive engagement.



Advancing Health Equity and Cancer Prevention

Medicaid enrollees experience higher rates of tobacco use and tobacco-related disease. By expanding cessation counseling benefits and removing utilization barriers, HB 1264 directly addresses disparities in access to preventive services.

Aligning With Maryland's Comprehensive Cancer Control Goals

The Council supports policies that advance prevention, early intervention, and risk reduction across the cancer continuum. HB 1264 aligns with Maryland's comprehensive cancer control priorities by strengthening tobacco cessation infrastructure.

For these reasons, the Maryland State Council on Cancer Control strongly supports HB 1264 and respectfully urges the House Health 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".

Taofeek Owonikoko, MD
Chair
Maryland State Council on Cancer Control