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Friday, February 27, 2026

Re: Letter of Support for House Bill 1576 (“Sales and Use Tax – Electronic Smoking Devices and Vaping Liquid – Maryland Pediatric Cancer Fund”)

Honorable Chair Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Vice Chair Delegate Jessica Feldmark, and Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon. I am pleased and honored to provide this testimony in support of HB1576.

My name is Curt Civin. I am a resident of Baltimore City; I am a co-Chair of the Maryland Pediatric Cancer Research Commission; and I am a Professor, pediatric oncologist, and cancer researcher at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. My testimony is provided within my own individual capacity and expertise and not on behalf of the University of Maryland, Baltimore or its School of Medicine. ***I am writing to express my support to increase taxes on vaping products for a double benefit in a budget neutral fashion. First, increasing the net cost of vaping will reduce its use. Second, the proceeds from the increased tax on vaping will provide recurrent funding for pediatric cancer research in Maryland.***

HB1576 proposes to increase the sales and use taxes on the sale of electronic smoking devices and vaping liquids. The extent of lung damage due to vaping is now well documented. Tiny particles, chemicals, and oils in the vaping cloud penetrate to the delicate alveolar respiratory units located at the far ends of our breathing tubules. These alveoli, critical for air exchange, are not designed to detoxify these foreign materials. Furthermore, in addition to the pulmonary damage caused directly by vaping, vaping initiates a highly addictive pathway to cigarette smoking, which in turn causes cancer. Sadly, there is a worrisome increase in vaping, especially among children and young adults. Increased taxation on cigarettes has been the most impactful means to reduce cigarette smoking, nationwide. ***I believe that HB1576 will similarly reduce vaping, with major health benefits to Marylanders.***

HB1576 further proposes that the increased revenue from the proposed increased taxes on vaping be distributed to the Maryland Pediatric Cancer Fund. Dedicating a portion of State revenues from the sale and regulation of electronic smoking and vaping products to pediatric cancer research aligns with Maryland’s public health priorities, since the anticipated new revenues from harmful products will be invested in lifesaving research on childhood cancer. The proposed increases in taxes on the sale of electronic smoking devices (proposed to be increased from 20% to 30%) and vaping liquids (proposed to be increased from 60% to 90%) will provide yearly support for pediatric cancer research in Maryland without stressing our State’s budget. Establishing a dedicated, recurring revenue stream for the Maryland Pediatric Cancer Fund will ensure continuing funding and impact of pediatric cancer research in the State.

Maryland's pediatric cancer research is defined by Health General §20–120 as research conducted in the State of Maryland to develop and advance the understanding of pediatric cancer and the techniques and modalities effective in the prevention, cure, screening, and treatment of pediatric cancer.

Support for pediatric cancer research has always been underfunded compared to funding for adult cancer research, despite the fact that cured children contribute hugely to society over decades. The current uncertainty surrounding federal funding poses additional challenges for researchers like me, who rely on these funds to advance critical medical research. I work as a Professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. My lab discovered blood-forming stem cells, and we continue to study how these “CD34 stem cells” work. CD34 blood-forming stem cells are used in stem cell transplants and gene therapies for many diseases, including cancers and inherited blood diseases such as sickle cell anemia. I have been blessed with the opportunity to train scores of abundantly talented young scientists and physicians and to collaborate with brilliant colleagues during my 5 decades as a physician-scientist at the University of Maryland, Johns Hopkins, and the NIH. And most important, I have had the chance to help patients and families, in Maryland and far beyond. I will always view science and policy through the lens of a pediatric oncologist who has been privileged to participate in breakthrough research discoveries that have translated to ongoing diagnoses and cures of many thousands of patients, including my own patients who are now vibrant community members and themselves parents of healthy children. ***Ensuring that funds for the Pediatric Cancer Research Fund will be available in future years to support Maryland's pediatric cancer research will speed innovative discoveries and clinical trials, reducing the time to patient benefit.***

Both the increased tax on injurious vaping and the sustained support for pediatric cancer research provided via HB1576 will demonstrate State of Maryland leadership across the United States.

On this basis of its valuable double benefit, I respectfully urge you to approve HB1576.

Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Curt I. Civin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Curt I. Civin, MD, co-Chair, Maryland Pediatric Cancer Research Commission