



Maryland  
Hospital Association

February 10, 2021

To: The Honorable Dereck E. Davis, Chair, House Economic Matters Committee

Re: Letter of Support- House Bill 134- Business Regulation - Flavored Tobacco Products - Prohibition

Dear Chair Davis:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 60 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on House Bill 134.

Under our unique Total Cost of Care Model, Maryland recently committed to reduce rates of severe maternal morbidity, uncontrolled asthma in children, and the impact of diabetes within the next three-to-five years. Accomplishing these goals will involve a multi-disciplinary approach that extends beyond the four walls of the hospital such as tobacco prevention strategies which have been shown to lower risks of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Smoking is a leading cause of preventable disease, disability and death in the US.<sup>1</sup> According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, smokers are 30–40% more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes than nonsmokers.<sup>2</sup> Diabetic smokers are more likely to suffer from heart and kidney disease. Youth who smoke can reduce their lung function and growth.<sup>3</sup> A recent study found that youth who vaped were five to seven times more likely to be infected with COVID-19 than youth who did not use e-cigarettes.<sup>4</sup>

House Bill 134 targets one of the root causes of youth smoking by prohibiting the manufacturing, shipping, importing or selling of flavored tobacco products in Maryland. Research shows 80% of youth who have ever smoked, started with a flavored tobacco product.<sup>5</sup>

Understanding the risks associated with adolescence and electronic smoking devices is an important factor in youth prevention. Youth and young adults are more at risk for long-term and long-lasting effects of nicotine exposure. Risks include nicotine addiction, mood disorders and permanent diminished impulse control. Additionally, because the brain is still developing, and

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<sup>1</sup> National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.) [Tobacco Use](#).

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). [Smoking and Diabetes](#).

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). [Smoking and Youth](#).

<sup>4</sup> Stanford Medicine. (August 11, 2020). [Vaping Linked to COVID-19 Risk in Teens and Young Adults](#).

<sup>5</sup> Journal of the American Medical Association. (October 16, 2015). "Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014,".

addiction is a learned behavior, nicotine in e-cigarettes and other tobacco products can prime the adolescent brain—increasing the risk they’ll use other drugs.<sup>6</sup>

Aside from the health risks associated with tobacco products, the economic loss from health care costs and productivity are substantial. Smoking related health care costs were estimated to be \$2.71 billion per year.<sup>7</sup>

Passing HB 134 is a step in the right direction to address this multi-faceted problem and improve the health all Marylanders, especially our youth.

For these reasons, we urge *favorable* report.

For more information, please contact:  
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<sup>6</sup> Surgeon General.(accessed January 27, 2020). [Know the Risks](#).

<sup>7</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. (October 20, 2020). <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/maryland>.