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January 30, 2024

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: SB 244 - Public Health – Clean Indoor Air Act – Revisions

Dear Chair Beidle:

The Maryland State Advisory Council on Health and Wellness (the Council) is submitting this letter of support for **Senate Bill (SB) 244 - Public Health – Clean Indoor Air Act – Revisions.** SB 244 prohibits vaping in certain indoor public areas where smoking cannabis and tobacco products are already prohibited under the Clean Indoor Air Act (CIAA) and requires specific signs be posted and maintained in these spaces.

The Council supports SB 244 as it protects the health and well-being of Marylanders by establishing clean air norms and reducing exposure to environmental aerosol from electronic smoking devices (ESDs). Currently, using ESDs (i.e., vapes, electronic cigarettes, e-cigarettes, electronic nicotine delivery systems, etc.) are not prohibited under the CIAA, although many businesses prohibit the use of ESDs in their establishments. When the CIAA first passed, ESDs were not yet widely available commercially nor were they popular with youth. Since then, ESD use has increased dramatically, especially among Maryland youth and young adults. During the 2021-2022 school year 15 percent of Maryland high school students and 5 percent of Maryland middle school students currently used ESDs (i.e., within the past 30 days) compared to 4 percent of adults. In general, youth perceive vaping as less risky than smoking cigarettes and many are unaware that most ESDs contain nicotine, a highly addictive substance that impairs adolescent brain development. Youth also use ESDs to vape cannabis, which poses a unique challenge given Maryland legalized adult-use cannabis on July 1, 2023. Because the CIAA excludes ESDs, youth are exposed more frequently to vaping in public places which threatens the progress made on establishing smoke-free norms with youth in recent years.

Provisions of SB 244 also protect respiratory health. Environmental ESD aerosols released from ESDs are made of “tiny particles or droplets in the air,”¹ not harmless water vapor, and can contain nicotine, THC and other cannabinoids, heavy metals, tiny particles, cancer-causing chemicals, and other toxins. Many of these chemicals are also found in tobacco smoke and can cause respiratory distress and disease. Exposure to ESD aerosols has documented health effects, particularly with prolonged exposure. Short-term exposure irritates the eyes, nose, and throat and impairs lung function while repeated long-term exposure may cause asthma or asthma-like symptoms, especially in children.

¹ Environmental Protection Agency. “Secondhand electronic-cigarette aerosol and indoor air quality,” 26 Oct 2023, Accessed 25 Jan 2024 at <https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/secondhand-electronic-cigarette-aerosol-and-indoor-air-quality>.

The Council respectfully urges this Committee to approve SB 244 as a critical public health measure to reduce exposure to secondhand environmental smoke and re-establish smoke-free social norms. The American Lung Association also supports adding ESDs to the Maryland CIAA, which would give Maryland one of the strongest CIAA laws in the US.² SB 244 merits consideration and approval as it will add to the plethora of public health benefits resulting from the Maryland CIAA and contribute to further tobacco-free generations by saving lives and improving the health of Marylanders.

Sincerely,

Teresa Titus-Howard, PhD, MHA, MSW, CCM
Chair, State Advisory Council on Health and Wellness

DRAFT

² American Lung Association, "State of Tobacco Control: Maryland," 2024, Accessed 25 Jan 2024 at <<https://www.lung.org/research/sotc/state-grades/maryland>>.