



Howard County Council

July 20, 2026

CB 48-2026

Support

Chair Jones, Vice-Chair Rigby and Members of the Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on CB 48-2026, Clean Air Integrity Act sponsored by Vice-Chair Rigby. The American Lung Association strongly supports this ordinance to prohibit the establishment of cigar bars and lounges in Howard County.

Maryland has a long history of protecting residents from exposure to secondhand smoke through its strong Clean Indoor Air Act. In recent years, there have been attempts at the state-level to undermine these protections by allowing for the establishment of cigar bars and lounges which would permit the serving of alcohol in businesses which also hold a tobacconist license, ultimately allowing more places within the state to permit smoking indoors that previously did not. We applaud Howard County's desire to protect residents by updating the code and prohibiting the establishment of cigar bars and lounges along with removing other exemptions that currently exist. We would encourage the council to consider updating the hotel room exemption by either repealing the provision entirely which many jurisdictions are currently doing or updating it to reflect the percentage of smokefree rooms.

Research has clearly demonstrated that there is no safe level of exposure to toxic secondhand smoke.¹ While ventilation or air purification systems are sometimes promoted as a way to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke, ventilation cannot remove all secondhand smoke and does not purify the air at rates fast enough to protect people from harmful toxins. The U.S. Surgeon General has concluded that even separating smokers from nonsmokers, cleaning the air, and ventilating buildings cannot eliminate exposure of nonsmokers to secondhand smoke. The only effective way to fully protect nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke is to completely eliminate smoking in indoor public spaces.²

Secondhand smoke is also an occupational hazard for many workers. Job related exposure to secondhand smoke is a significant, but entirely preventable, cause of premature death among U.S. workers. The National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH) and the US Surgeon General found that occupational exposure to secondhand smoke increases workers' risk of lung cancer and other diseases. Patrons were also found to have significantly elevated levels of a tobacco-specific lung carcinogen after a four-hour visit to a casino that allowed



smoking.^{3,4} The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers states that the only way to eliminate indoor exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is to eliminate all indoor smoking activity.

The American Lung Association thanks the council for their continued commitment to the health and wellbeing of the residents of Howard County and the desire to protect residents from exposure to secondhand smoke. The American Lung Association **supports** the legislation before you, CB 48-2026 and would encourage members of the Council to vote yes on this bill and protect Maryland's strong smokefree laws. If you have additional questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aleks Casper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Aleks Casper
American Lung Association
Director of Advocacy
202-719-2810
aleks.casper@lung.org

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coordinating Center for Health Promotion, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006.

² HHS, 2006.

³ Anderson KE, Kliris J, Murphy L, et al (2003). Metabolites of a Tobacco-Specific Lung Carcinogen in Nonsmoking Casino Patrons. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev* 12(12):1544-6.

⁴ Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights. Smokefree Casinos. <https://nonsmokersrights.org/smokefree-casinos>

July 20, 2026

Position: Support

Howard County – Council Bill 48-2026 - Clean Air Integrity Act

Councilmembers:

The Restaurant Association of Maryland supports Council Bill 48-2026, which would prohibit retail tobacco stores that allow indoor smoking from permitting the consumption of alcoholic beverages on the premises.

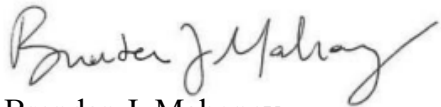
Many of our restaurant bars accommodated smoking customers before Maryland's Clean Indoor Air Act became law in 2008. Given that the General Assembly banned smoking in indoor areas open to the public, including establishments that sell and serve alcohol and other workplaces, it would be unfair to allow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

Moreover, if retail tobacco stores were allowed to permit the consumption of alcohol and also have pool tables, a jukebox, or other entertainment, it would essentially be the same type of operation as a bar before smoking was banned.

This bill appropriately addresses multiple concerns by prohibiting the consumption of alcoholic beverages on the premises of such establishments.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Council to pass this legislation.

Sincerely,



Brendan J. Mahoney

Government Affairs & Local Grassroots Manager