
Support for CB 48-2026

From Cynthia Hallett <Cynthia.Hallett@no-smoke.org>
Date Mon 7/20/2026 2:10 PM
To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

 1 attachment (242 KB)

ANR Letter of Support for CB 48 - 2026_July 20.docx;

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Attached and pasted below is a letter of support from Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights for CB 48-2026.



July 20, 2026

To the Members of the Howard County Council,

On behalf of our members in the state of Maryland and across the country, Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights (ANR) applauds your efforts to prioritize the health and wellbeing of your residents. We urge your support for amendments to [CB 48-2026](#), the Clean Air Integrity Act, in order to ensure all workplaces are 100% smokefree and thus all workers have access to safe, smokefree air. As national experts in the public health community, we are calling on decision makers to close dangerous loopholes in smokefree laws that undermine the integrity of these life saving laws.

There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke, including from cigars; even brief exposure can cause serious health problems and be deadly.^{[i],[ii],[iii]} Cigar smoke has higher levels of cancer-causing substances and toxins and more tar than cigarettes. When lit, cigars release fine particles into the air, which can cause heart and lung disease. Breathing any type of smoke can trigger heart attack, stroke, or asthma attacks. Cigars also take longer to smoke, resulting in higher exposure to toxins to both the user and those around them, especially workers.^[iv]

A person's place of employment should not determine whether they can breathe clean, smokefree air while at work. People who work in places where smoking is allowed have no choice but to inhale this deadly secondhand smoke on a regular basis. They deserve the same protections as all workers.

Comprehensive smokefree laws improve indoor air quality, reduce secondhand smoke exposure, change social norms regarding the acceptability of smoking, prevent youth and young adult smoking initiation, and reduce asthma hospitalizations among people who don't smoke.^{[xii],[xiii]} Smokefree laws lead to reductions in coronary events (especially heart attacks), making comprehensive smokefree laws one of the most effective and cost-effective approaches for reducing heart disease—the leading cause of death—in the U.S.^[xiv]

The cigar industry has launched a coordinated effort across the country to renormalize indoor smoking and boost their profitability by luring customers under the guise that cigar smoking is not as hazardous to health and that cigar lounges are simply positive business opportunities. Encouraging new public consumption establishments – many which are branded as entrepreneurial or economic justice opportunities -- are becoming more acceptable and encourage the behaviors that largely contribute to chronic disease and illness.

Furthermore, the tobacco industry's alignment with cultural identity and its promotion of "cigar culture" not only increases its appeal among targeted populations, but also minimizes the stigma around smoking and raises the social acceptability of exposure to secondhand smoke. This why efforts to bring back cigar smoking inside the main terminal of the Detroit airport or create exemptions to otherwise strong smokefree workplace laws cities like Savannah, GA and states like Wisconsin and Ohio are being met with harsh and intensive resistance by communities who are siding with decades of proven public health benefits, rather than giving in to the special pet projects of a select few who want to entertain their personal interests at the risk of their community's health.

Despite the persuasive rhetoric, cigar bars do not exist merely as stand-alone entities that are obscure and out of the public eye – they can become part of the community's social culture. They market to a segment of the community that is untapped and primed for exploitation. There is no proven economic benefit from cigar bars; in fact they have a negative impact on the overall economic activity in a community by failing to pay living wages and contributing to increased healthcare costs. Smoke-filled environments have been proven to have a [negative economic impact](#). Absenteeism, lost productivity, and increased maintenance and insurance costs will negatively affect the bottom line for businesses and governments.

Lastly, as public health advocates, we would be remiss if we didn't note that **cigars, like cigarettes, contain nicotine, the substance that can lead to tobacco dependence**. A single full-size cigar can contain nearly as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes. Inhaling cigar smoke, as some people do, can deliver as much nicotine into the body as cigarettes. And even if a person doesn't intentionally inhale, large amounts of nicotine can be absorbed through the lining of the mouth and contribute to other forms of cancer.

Thank you for your leadership and for allowing us the opportunity to provide information on this pressing matter. Please feel free to contact me at 510-841-3045 if you have any questions, comments, or feedback.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia Hallett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cynthia" and last name "Hallett" clearly distinguishable.

Cynthia Hallett, MPH
President and CEO

[i] US Department of Health and Human Services. [The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General](#). Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services,

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; 2014.

[ii] US Department of Health and Human Services. [The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General](#). Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; 2006.

[iii] US Department of Health and Human Services. [A Report of the Surgeon General: How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: What It Means to You](#). Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; 2010.

[iv] American Lung Association [Health Effects of Cigars | American Lung Association](#)

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

[viii] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General](#). Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014.

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Cynthia Hallett, MPH (she/her)

President and CEO

Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights

<https://no-smoke.org/>

www.nonsmokersrights.org

<https://smokefreemusiccities.org>

July 20, 2026

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of the community that is untapped and primed for exploitation. There is no proven economic benefit from cigar bars; in fact they have a negative impact on the overall economic activity in a community by failing to pay living wages and contributing to increased healthcare costs. Smoke-filled environments have been proven to have a [negative economic impact](#). Absenteeism, lost productivity, and increased maintenance and insurance costs will negatively affect the bottom line for businesses and governments.

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Sincerely,



Cynthia Hallett, MPH
President and CEO

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[iii] US Department of Health and Human Services. [A Report of the Surgeon General: How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: What It Means to You](#). Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; 2010.

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Written Testimony Submission for Monday, July 20 Legislative Public Hearing- Agenda Item CB48-2026

From Yvonne Commodore-Mensah <ycommod1@jhmi.edu>

Date Mon 7/20/2026 6:41 AM

To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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My name is Dr. Yvonne Commodore-Mensah, and I am a Howard County resident. I am also a Professor and Cardiovascular Nurse Epidemiologist at the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing and Bloomberg School of Public Health, where my research focuses on preventing heart disease and advancing health equity. I write today in strong support of CB 48-2026.

Howard County has built a reputation as a community that values public health and worker safety. One of the ways we have done that is by maintaining strong protections against secondhand smoke in indoor spaces. I believe those protections are worth preserving.

As a cardiovascular epidemiologist, I want the Council to understand what the science tells us. There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Even brief exposure can trigger changes in blood vessel function and blood clotting that increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. Secondhand smoke exposure is linked to coronary heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer in nonsmoking adults, and communities that have enacted comprehensive smoke-free laws have seen measurable declines in hospital admissions for heart attacks. These are not abstract statistics. They represent our neighbors, our coworkers, and our families.

The community health impact of weakening smoke-free protections would fall hardest on those with the least power to avoid it. No one should have to work in an environment where they are regularly exposed to secondhand smoke. Whether someone works directly in a tobacco shop, cleans the facility after hours, or provides maintenance services, every worker deserves the same basic protection for their health and safety. Hospitality and service workers are disproportionately exposed to secondhand smoke on the job, and many cannot simply choose a different workplace. Protecting them protects the health of our entire community.

Indoor smoking environments also carry costs that extend well beyond the walls of any single establishment. They contribute to preventable illness, higher healthcare spending, lost productivity, and greater strain on families managing chronic disease. And when smoking is normalized in social settings, it undermines decades of progress in reducing tobacco use, particularly among young people who take their cues from the environments around them.

I also support this bill because it provides important clarity. Allowing indoor smoking while alcohol is consumed creates the kind of environment that many of our smoke-free laws were designed to prevent. CB 48-2026 helps ensure those protections remain meaningful and effective.

Howard County has long been a leader in promoting healthy communities, and I encourage the Council to continue that leadership by supporting CB 48-2026.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dr. Yvonne Commodore-Mensah
Elkridge, Howard County Resident

Yvonne Commodore-Mensah, PhD, MHS, RN |Professor

Associate Dean for Research

Johns Hopkins School of Nursing

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Department of Epidemiology(Joint Appointment)

525 N. Wolfe Street, Room N530U, Baltimore, MD 21205

P. 202-465-2551 | E. ycommod1@jhu.edu

[Book time with Dr. Yvonne Commodore-Mensah](#)



Outlook

CB 48-2026

From Ann Balcerzak <annbalcerzak@gmail.com>

Date Thu 7/23/2026 8:08 PM

To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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Please vote Yes on this bill

Thank you.

Sent from my iPhone

Anti-smoking ordinance

From Carlo Contoreggi <ccontore@yahoo.com>
Date Thu 7/23/2026 7:45 PM
To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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Please vote YES on CB 48-2026 to protect workers, customers, and our community from the well-documented harms of [secondhand](#) and [thirdhand](#) tobacco smoke.

Sincerely,
Carlo Contoreggi MD
12141 Red Stream Way
Columbia MD 21044

443-629-0909

Sent from my iPhone

Please support CB48-2026

From Dona Oldfield <dona.oldfield@gmail.com>

Date Thu 7/23/2026 8:43 PM

To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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I support a smoke-free environment. I am a senior citizen with health issues, and cannot be in an environment with tobacco smoke.

Please support CB48-2926.

Dona Oldfield
12145 Red Stream Way
Columbia, MD 21044
410-707-5720 mobile

CB 48-2026

From Evelyn Gradijan <evgrad@gmail.com>

Date Thu 7/23/2026 5:21 PM

To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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Vote yes on CB 48-2026 and keep our county smoke free.

Evelyn Gradijan
12117 Blue Flag Way

YES on CB 48-2026

From Tracy Black <tracylblack@hotmail.com>

Date Thu 7/23/2026 10:12 PM

To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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I support a smoke-free Howard County. Please vote YES on CB 48-2026. Thank you.

Tracy L. Black, CPA, CGMA, MBA
10655 Whiterock Ct.
Laurel, MD. 20723-1260
240.602.6559 Mobile
tracylblack@hotmail.com

Vote YES on CB 48-2026!

From Martin Wasserman <mpwasserman1@sendgrassroots.com>

Date Mon 7/27/2026 12:17 PM

To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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Dear Councilmembers,

I am writing today to ask you to protect Howard County's clean indoor air protections and vote YES on CB 48-2026.

Howard County has worked hard to protect workers and residents from exposure to indoor tobacco smoke. CB 48-2026 closes a loophole that could allow retail tobacco shops to function as indoor cigar lounges where customers bring alcohol and smoke indoors. No employee should have to choose between earning a paycheck and protecting their health.

There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke, and the harmful effects can linger long after smoking has stopped through thirdhand smoke residue. By passing CB 48-2026, Howard County can preserve its commitment to clean indoor air, protect workers and customers, and prevent the creation of new indoor smoking venues.

Please vote YES on CB 48-2026 and help keep Howard County workplaces smoke-free.

Thank you for your consideration.

Martin Wasserman

mpwasserman1@gmail.com

13200 Triadelphia Road, Ellicott City, MD, USA

CB 48-2026

From Frank Ryan <frjryan3@gmail.com>

Date Mon 8/3/2026 3:35 PM

To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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Please vote YES on CB 48-2026.

Frank Ryan
12113 Blue Flag Way, Columbia, MD 21044

CB 48

From Victoria Lawson <victoria_126@msn.com>

Date Thu 7/23/2026 8:57 PM

To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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I support a Smoke-free Howard County. Please pass CB 48.

Marvin A. Lawson

12118 Blue Flag Way

Columbia, MD 21044

Sent from my Galaxy

Reject CB59

From Monica O'Connor <mdoconnor17@gmail.com>
Date Mon 10/5/2026 10:26 AM
To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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Dear Councilmembers,

I am writing to urge you to reject CB59.

Amendment 1 removes the moratorium but has provisions that would delay/kill 90% of the projects. Please oppose this bill even w/o a moratorium. The proposed amendment does not change the chilling effect this legislation will have on desperately needed solar in Howard County.

I urge the council to reject CB59 if it requires a moratorium or imposes the conditional use process which is quite clearly contrary to the Maryland code.

Thank you

Monica Oconnor
Howard County resident D1

Solar projects on Farm Land

From Peter Bates <pjb06221996@gmail.com>

Date Mon 10/5/2026 10:25 AM

To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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Dear Councilmember O'Connor,

I am writing to you as a resident living adjacent to the farmland currently being considered for a proposed solar project. I am reaching out to express my strong concerns regarding this development and to respectfully request that the council delay approval of this project.

First, I am deeply concerned about the potential harmful effects this large-scale installation could have on nearby residents, including impacts on local property values, quality of life, and the surrounding rural environment.

Additionally, there is a fundamental distinction between agricultural farming and industrial energy production. Utilizing agricultural land for solar facilities represents a significant shift from traditional crop farming, allowing developers to potentially exploit tax incentives and double-dip under agricultural classifications that were originally intended to support food production and land conservation.

Given these significant issues, I ask that the county council pause this proposal to allow for a thorough review of its impact on our community and local tax policies.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Peter Bates
4179 Heritage Hill Lane