
Maura J. Rossman, M.D., Health Officer

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Position: Support

Testimony for CB 57-2019
November 18, 2019

Howard County Health Department supports CB 57- 2109 to raise the age for tobacco and e-cigarette purchases from 18 to 21 years in Howard County and to align with the new Maryland State Law which became effective October 1, 2019. Amendments include:

- Defining electronic smoking devices, (ESDs), to include e-liquid regardless of nicotine content
- Replacing “minor” with “an individual under the age of 21 years”
- Defining “tobacco products” to be more comprehensive and include ESDs
- Increasing penalty fines for owners
- Including ESD placement in the “placement of tobacco products”

Tobacco use remains a persistent public health problem and electronic smoking devices, (ESD), are threatening to addict a new generation. Adolescents are increasingly using ESD. Vaping, a term for ESD use, has sharply increased in the adolescent-aged population. According to the 2018 National Youth Tobacco Survey, high school students reported an e-cigarette use increase of 78% between 2017-18. Similarly, among middle school students, the survey reported an e-cigarette use increase of 48%, between 2017-18. Today, more adolescents report using ESD than any other tobacco product. Research has shown that youth and young adults are more susceptible to nicotine addiction due to their developing brains. Nearly all smokers start as kids or young adults and these age groups are heavily targeted by the tobacco industry. The younger the age that someone uses nicotine-containing products, the heavier their eventual use and the harder it is for them to quit.

Tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable death and disability in the U.S. Long-term tobacco use results in shortened life expectancy, increased cancer rates, increased healthcare costs and reduced quality of life. Although the full potential for health risks of ESD are still being assessed, research has clearly shown that vaping causes harm. Recent reports of serious lung injury and death associated with vaping are very troubling. As of October 29, 2019, 1,888 cases of e-cigarette, or vaping, product use associated lung injury have been reported to CDC from 49 states (all except Alaska), the District of Columbia, and 1 U.S. territory.

Aside from the very negative health effects of tobacco use, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that in Maryland alone, tobacco costs \$2.7 billion in health expenditures every year and an additional \$2.2 billion in lost productivity to Maryland businesses. This costs Maryland taxpayers on average \$798/household each year.

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An amendment to correct language in the bill will be forthcoming. Currently in State law, only the retailer is fined even if an employee violates the law by selling a product to a minor. The amendment will recommend changing County language to reflect the same.

Thank you for your support of this bill which will:

- Prevent adolescents from becoming addicted to tobacco products
- Decrease the burden of disease in Howard County
- Decrease health care costs associated with tobacco use
- Save lives

Sources:

1. Increasing the Sale of Age for Tobacco to 21 Will Reduce Smoking and Save Lives
<https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/content/whatwedo/statelocalissues/sales21/tobacco21factsheetbrief.pdf>
2. Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs, 2014
<http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/stateandcommunity/bestpractices/index.htm>
3. Harold J. Farber, Smita Pakhale, and Enid R. Neptune (). Tobacco 21: An Important Public Policy to Protect Our Youth. *Ann Am Thorac Soc* Vol 13, No 12, pp 2115–2118.
4. US Department of Health and Human Services. The health consequences of smoking—50 years of progress: a report of the surgeon general, 2014. Available at:
<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/50-years-of-progress>.