



# NAACP

## *Maryland*

### STATE CONFERENCE

**Economic Matters Committee**  
**HB-477 2021 Maryland Local Tobacco Control Bill**  
**Position: Favorable**  
**March 1, 2022**

As President of the NAACP Maryland State Conference, I join other coalition partners like the American Heart Association in strongly supporting HB-477 and appreciate the General Assembly's emphasis on promoting health equity, eliminating health disparities and ensuring that Maryland's localities can pass their own laws regulating tobacco products to fit the specific needs of their communities, ultimately improving health in Black and Brown communities and the entire state against the traditional efforts to target the same communities.

Local governments in Maryland have been stripped of their power to fully protect residents from the devastating effects of tobacco use due to a contentious 2013 court ruling (*Altadis v. Prince George's County*) — brought on by the tobacco industry — preventing them from passing new laws regulating tobacco products.

This prohibits local governments from responding to what causes people to use tobacco in their communities — stifling progress in reducing use, especially among young people. Without the authority to enact and enforce tobacco control laws, local governments cannot respond to what causes people to use tobacco in their communities. What the state is doing is called preemption and it is ultimately hurting the health of Maryland's residents.

The NAACP Maryland State Conference, views preemption as a tool that is being promoted by special interest groups, disempowers and disproportionately hurts Black and brown communities as stated.

**While all individuals should have equal opportunity to live a healthy life, the tobacco industry employs marketing strategies that have led to disparities in tobacco use, including higher use of tobacco products in populations of lower socio economic status , African Americans, Indigenous Americans, young people and LGBTQ individuals.**

**Researchers in Washington, D.C. found that stores in predominantly African American neighborhoods were up to 10 times more likely to display tobacco ads inside and outside than retailers in areas with fewer African American residents.**

**Black and brown communities have been unfairly targeted in marketing tobacco-related products and it is hurting the chances of our young people to live healthy and productive lives.**

**It goes without saying that using tobacco-related products is an immense health risk to anyone that uses them. Each year, 7,500 Marylanders die from tobacco related causes. That's one person – a mom or dad, son or daughter, friend or colleague – every hour of every day.....**

**23% of Maryland high school students use electronic smoking devices, more commonly known as vapes. Given the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating impact on the heart, lungs and other vital organs, curbing tobacco use is more important than ever. And on the subject of COVID-19 and its impact: Covid 19 killed 350,000 Americans last year. Cancer is responsible for over 600,000. We must do more.**

**The Maryland Local Tobacco Control Bill would restore the ability of localities to enact and enforce local laws regulating the sale and distribution of cigarettes and other tobacco products guided by the influence of local communities and not traditional tobacco marketing.**

**For all these reasons, I recommend the General Assembly swiftly pass, HB-477, so that Maryland's localities can pass their own laws regulating tobacco products to fit the specific needs of their communities and create healthier environments for the citizens of our state.**

**NAACP**  
**Maryland State Conference**  
8775 Cloudleap Court, Columbia, MD 21045 Suite 200  
[www.naacpmaryland.org](http://www.naacpmaryland.org)