

CALVERT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

P.O. Box 980
975 Solomons Island Road, N
Prince Frederick, Maryland 20678

Laurence Polsky, MD, MPH, F.A.C.O.G
Health Officer

Champ Thomaskutty, MPH
Deputy Health Officer



STATE OF MARYLAND

Local (410)-535-5400
Washington Area (301) 855-1353
Baltimore Area (410) 269-1051
Fax (410) 535-5285

www.calverthealth.org

Hello Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice-Chair and Members of the Committee

My name is Tammy Halterman and I am an employee of the State of Maryland. On behalf of Calvert County Health Department, I am writing in favor of HB 1174. I work at the Calvert County Health Department in Community Health and coordinate the Tobacco Retailer Program. The health department provides the education piece to retailers while the Calvert County Sheriff's Office provides the enforcement piece by conducting the retailer compliance checks. This bill is important to us because we strive to improve public health by reducing underage tobacco use, preventing tobacco-caused disease, and saving lives. Data shows that those who start using tobacco products prior to this age are more likely to be lifelong smokers leading to chronic diseases and thereby, increasing healthcare costs. As it stands now, the law states the Office of the State's Attorney prosecutes local infractions. In other counties that have a different form of government there exists a provision of State law that allows the State's Attorney to designate to the county attorney the power to prosecute these violations. However, Calvert is one of the few counties with a Commissioner form of government which does not have this provision. Therefore, we are asking for your approval to allow our county to have the same function as Code, Charter, and Municipalities. (Reference: MD. Code Ann., *Local Gov. Art.*, § 6-108)

As a condition of the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Federal Block Grant (SAPTBG) received by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), all states must comply with the federal Synar Amendment adopted in 1992. States must conduct annual, random, unannounced inspections of tobacco retail outlets and work to reduce underage access to tobacco by adhering to a requirement that licensed tobacco retailers maintain a Retailer Violation Rate (RVR) of no more than 20%, which means at least 80% of retailers inspected in the state sample must refuse tobacco sales to underage buyers.

As we educate retailers, we remind them that their tobacco license brings with it not only the right to sell tobacco products, but the responsibility to do so in accordance with the laws of the State of Maryland. For these reasons, we are asking for your assistance in providing the ability to have our local State's Attorney designate the authority to our county attorney to uphold accountability.

Thank you.

Person with a hearing impairment – Call Maryland Relay Service at TTY 711 or 1-800-201-7165