



February 19, 2024

The Honorable Delegate C. T. Wilson
Chair, House Economic Matters Committee
Room 231, House Office Building
Annapolis Maryland 21401-1991

RE: HB 374 – Prince George’s County – Alcoholic Beverages - Cigar Lounge License – Letter of Opposition

Dear Chair Wilson:

The Maryland State Council on Cancer Control (“the Council”) submits this letter of opposition for House Bill 374 (“HB 374”), titled: “Prince George’s County – Alcoholic Beverages – Cigar Lounge License”. HB 374, as drafted, would establish a license to allow for the joint sale and consumption of alcohol and cigars on the same premises in Prince George’s County. This license would then operate as an exception to the Clean Indoor Air Act (“CIAA”).

In 2007, the Maryland General Assembly passed the CIAA. The CIAA adopted minimum comprehensive and uniform statewide protections from exposure to secondhand smoke in places of employment and public places, including, but not limited to, stores, restaurants, and bars.

The CIAA defines “Smoking” to include “the burning of a lighted cigarette, cigar, pipe, or other substance that contains tobacco.” The CIAA further defines “Indoor area open to the public” to include “an indoor area of any establishment licensed . . . for the sale of alcoholic beverages.” With certain exceptions, the CIAA unequivocally prohibits “smoking” in “an indoor area open to the public.”

The Council is deeply concerned that HB 374 erodes the protection of the CIAA. Indeed, based upon the language highlighted above and the proposed amendment to the CIAA, HB 374 will effectively eliminate current protection from secondhand smoke emitted by cigars in bars and restaurants located in Prince George’s County. Moreover, if passed, HB 374 would serve as precedent for other Maryland counties to replicate this legislation, which would further undermine the CIAA. Additionally, the Council is very concerned that future legislation could extend the license contemplated by HB 374 to other types of tobacco products.

Unquestionably, the CIAA has reduced exposure in Maryland to the carcinogens of secondhand smoke. Further, there is a clear causal relationship between the carcinogens of secondhand smoke and lung cancer, and links between secondhand smoke and other cancers.

While the Council usually does not comment on bills unique to specific counties, HB 374 seeks to reverse protections of the CIAA and set precedent for further rollbacks. As the State Council is



tasked with identifying policies to reduce the cancer burden in Maryland, the Council submits this letter of opposition.

Sincerely,

Kevin Cullen, MD
Chair,
Maryland State Council on Cancer Control