



January 24, 2024

Danielle McCray
Chair: Health, Environment, and Technology Committee
Baltimore City Council
100 Holliday Street, Room 525
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Subject: The Public Health Implications of Tobacco Product Use in Ballparks

Dear Committee Members,

As part of our ongoing commitment to public health education, we would like to present evidence-based information on the use of smokeless tobacco products and its implications in Baltimore City.

In Maryland, tobacco-related illnesses claim approximately 7,500 lives annually.ⁱ Smokeless tobacco products, increasingly popular among both youth and adults, contain at least 28 known carcinogens that pose significant health risks such as oral, pancreatic, and esophageal cancer.ⁱⁱ

The urgency of addressing smokeless tobacco use cannot be overstated, especially considering the susceptibility of our youth. The tobacco industry's marketing strategies are particularly effective on young people, with alluring flavors and innovative products.ⁱⁱⁱ Approximately 1,000 kids aged 12-17 initiate smokeless tobacco use each day.^{iv} Notably, the influence of sports role models exacerbates this trend, with high school athletes showing nearly double the rate of smokeless tobacco use compared to non-athletes.^v This alarming statistic underscores the need for immediate action to protect this vulnerable population.

Creating an environment in which smokeless tobacco use is not normalized or glorified in sporting venues is essential in safeguarding our youth. Several cities with Major League Baseball teams have implemented policies to restrict tobacco use in ballparks.^{vi} Such policies have garnered public support from most U.S. adults, including 60% of people who personally use tobacco products.^{vii} These tobacco-free policies offer a blueprint for effective public health interventions that can be applied in our city.

In joining this movement, Baltimore has the opportunity to set a strong, unified example for our youth and contribute to a tobacco-free future for sports and public life. By taking steps to limit tobacco use in ballparks, we can significantly diminish the harmful influence of smokeless tobacco products on our younger population.

We believe that an informed understanding of the health risks associated with smokeless tobacco use in public spaces, such as ballparks and other sporting venues, is crucial for making decisions that impact the health and well-being of our community. We remain committed to providing evidence-based perspective on the health implications of smokeless tobacco product use and protecting the public health of Baltimore City.

Institute for Global Tobacco Control

2213 McElderry Street, 4th Floor, Baltimore, MD 21205 U.S.A. +1-410-614-5378

 publichealth.jhu.edu/igtc   [globaltobaccocontrol](https://www.youtube.com/globaltobaccocontrol)  [IGTC_Hopkins](https://twitter.com/IGTC_Hopkins)

Thank you for your timely consideration.

Best regards,



Joanna Cohen

Director, Institute for Global Tobacco Control

Chair, Department of Health, Behavior and Society

Bloomberg Professor of Disease Prevention, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

CC:

Councilmember John Bullock

Councilmember Mark Conway

Councilmember Ryan Dorsey

Councilmember Phylicia Porter

Councilmember James Torrence

Councilmember Isaac “Yitzzy” Schleifer

Staff: Deontre Hayes

ⁱ Maryland Department of Health. About – The Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control. Maryland Department of Health. Accessed January 16, 2024.

https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/ohpetup/pages/tob_home.aspx

ⁱⁱ National Cancer Institute. Smokeless Tobacco and Cancer. National Cancer Institute. Published October 25, 2010. Accessed January 16, 2024. <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/tobacco/smokeless-fact-sheet>

ⁱⁱⁱ Villanti AC, Johnson AL, Ambrose BK, et al. Flavored Tobacco Product Use in Youth and Adults: Findings From the First Wave of the PATH Study (2013–2014). *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 2017;53(2):139-151. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2017.01.026>

^{iv} Lipari RN, Ahrnsbrak RD, Pemberton MR, Porter JD. Risk and Protective Factors and Estimates of Substance Use Initiation: Results from the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. www.samhsa.gov. Published September 2017. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-DR-FFR3-2016/NSDUH-DR-FFR3-2016.htm>

^v Agaku IT, Singh T, Jones SE, et al. Combustible and Smokeless Tobacco Use Among High School Athletes — United States, 2001–2013. www.cdc.gov. Published September 4, 2015. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmWr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6434a2.htm>

^{vi} Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. On Opening Day, Nearly Half of Major League Stadiums Will Be.... Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Published March 30, 2017. Accessed January 16, 2024. https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/press-releases/2017_03_30_baseball

^{vii} Odani S, O’Flaherty K, Veatch N, Tynan MA, Agaku IT. Attitudes toward smokeless tobacco use at all public sports venues among U.S. adults, 2016. *Preventive Medicine*. 2018;111:397-401. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2017.11.034>

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