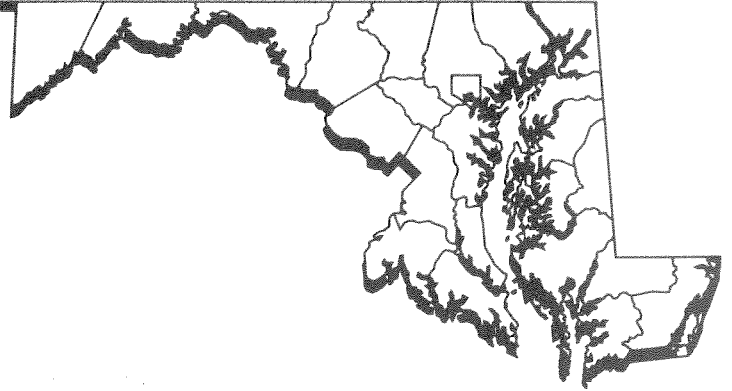


Maryland Association of
COUNTY HEALTH OFFICERS

an affiliate of Maryland Association of Counties, Inc.

June 20, 2008

Rianna Brown
Baltimore City Health Department
210 Guilford Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21202



Dear Ms. Brown:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO), I would like to express our strong support of the Baltimore City Health Department's effort to ban the sale of single, cheap cigars in Baltimore City. Please accept this letter of support as public comment.


During the last legislative session, MACHO submitted a letter of support for House Bill 609 – Cigars - Sales of Less Than Five Per Package – Prohibited, which would have required that cigars be sold in packages of at least five cigars, for the entire state. As you well know, this bill did not pass. Baltimore City viewed this as an issue that could not wait until next session and by pursuing local legislation for the city, will serve as a pilot for the remaining jurisdictions.

It has been well documented that cigar smoking is on the rise among youth and adults. The 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicated that 14% of high school students smoke cigars. The rate of cigar smoking is even higher among African American youth and young adults in urban communities, such as Baltimore. Cigar smoking is as dangerous to health as cigarette smoking and youth vastly underestimate the risk of addiction and the negative health consequences that accompany cigar smoking. When sold singly, cigars do not carry any health warnings for the buyer or consumer.

When available one at a time, cheap manufactured cigars cost less than \$1, a price even young teens can afford. Ready availability of cheap single cigars at neighborhood stores and gas stations makes impulse purchasing likely. Enticed by allure of appearing cool and the fun flavors of many of the cigars available, young consumers purchase cigars at increasingly dangerous rates. If available only in packages of five, cigars may be too expensive for many young smokers or contemplators and the higher cost may inhibit impulse purchases and use.

For these reasons, MACHO fully supports Baltimore City's pursuit of passage of a bill that would ban the sale of single, cheap cigars in the city.

Sincerely,


Larry L. Leitch
President
Carroll County Health Officer

RM/rm