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Office of the Chairman

June 9, 2008

Baltimore City Health Department
210 Guilford Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Attention: Rianna Brown

RE: Proposed Regulation Banning the Sale of
Single, Cheap Cigars in Baltimore City

To Whom It May Concern:

I write to comment on the document, "Proposed Regulation Banning the Sale of Single, Cheap Cigars in Baltimore City". As a pulmonary physician and public health professional who has long worked in tobacco control, I am fully supportive of this measure.

The sale of single, cheap cigars poses a public health threat. First, it offers an additional and unfortunate point of entree for initiation of smoking. As pointed out in the regulation, a pack of cigarettes is costly and single cigarette sales are not allowed. The availability of small cigars, costing under \$1 each, offers an alternative to cigarettes for young smokers; the risks of the cigars are not likely to be known to those using them and they lack health warnings. We know that only limited nicotine exposure is needed before youth become addicted.

Unfortunately, the products are being marketed to African-Americans, a group that constitutes a majority of the residents of Baltimore. Rates of smoking have been low among African-American youth in the city, but the small cigars clearly pose a threat. Additionally, much of the marketing appears to be directed towards African-Americans.

The proposed regulation correctly documents the adverse health effects of cigar use. There have now been decades of research on the health effects of cigarettes and of other tobacco products, including cigars. Beyond these risks to health, one of the most serious consequences of availability of small, cheap cigars is the creation of a population at risk for turning to cigarettes.

The Baltimore City Health Department has proposed a reasonable, cheap and enforceable regulation. It should be moved forward and implemented.

If I can be of further assistance as you evaluate this regulation, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Samet". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jonathan M. Samet, M.D., M.S.
Professor and Chairman
Jacob I and Irene B. Fabrikant Professor in
Health, Risk, and Society

JMS:rbg