



February 17, 2020

Representative Laurie Halverson and members of the House Commerce Committee,

The Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota (ANSR) strongly supports HF3032 prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products including menthol.

For decades, the tobacco industry has targeted children and teens. Tobacco executives admitted to these intentions in countless emails and industry documents throughout the late 20th century. Now, the industry is craftier, but their intentions are still clear. E-cigarettes are marketed and sold in ways that are appealing to teens through social media and the internet. E-cigarette companies place ads on youth educational sites like “MathWay” and “Cool Math Games”. The targeting of the African American community with menthol tobacco has been well documented, egregious, and dramatically effective resulting in 88% of African Americans who smoke using menthol. Since menthol makes it easier to start and harder to quit, this causes more health disparities.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota estimate that more than 6,300 Minnesotans die each year from tobacco use, and commercial tobacco costs our state more than \$7 billion in healthcare and lost productivity. This deadly problem demands action.

The federal government banned fruit and candy flavors from cigarettes and recently banned some flavored e-cigarettes, but left it to other levels of government to address menthol and other flavored tobacco products like most e-cigarettes and cheap cigars. Minnesota can and should take this important step.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Weigum
President, Association for Nonsmokers-MN

