



February 19, 2020

Commerce Committee

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Rep. Ruth Richardson
Rep. Chris Swedzinski
Rep. Brad Tabke
Rep. Tama Theis

RE: HF 3032 (prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products)

Dear Chair Halverson and Committee Members:

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation is a coalition of more than 60 organizations working to reduce youth tobacco use and end tobacco's harm for good.

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation enthusiastically supports **HF 3032**, which prohibits the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Minnesota. Prohibiting the sale of all flavored tobacco products will create a healthier future for our kids and address tobacco-related health disparities.

Flavored tobacco products are a key reason Minnesota is facing a youth nicotine epidemic. The growing health crisis of youth tobacco addiction requires swift, comprehensive action. In addition to being a major health crisis, tobacco addiction is also a consumer protection issue.

In October, state officials released the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey data that shows another jump in youth e-cigarette use. While the survey found youth cigarette smoking is at historic lows, it demonstrated that e-cigarettes and flavored tobacco products have erased decades of progress to reduce youth tobacco use.

The tobacco industry blatantly uses flavors to attract the next generation of smokers, along with sleek products and predatory marketing. In particular, the industry has long used menthol flavoring that makes it easier for kids to start smoking and harder for adults to quit. Flavored products mask the harshness of tobacco, but are just as addictive and dangerous as other products.

In Minnesota, two-thirds of current high-school tobacco users reported using a flavored product. National surveys find that 97 percent of current youth e-cigarette users had used a flavored e-cigarette, and seven in 10 youth say they use e-cigarettes "because they come in flavors I like."

Menthol tobacco products are aggressively marketed not only toward youth, but also to African Americans, women and LGBTQ communities. In the United States, 88 percent of African American smokers smoke menthols, compared to 29 percent of white smokers. Exempting menthol-flavored tobacco products from regulation has left kids, people of color and LGBTQ individuals exposed to the predatory tobacco industry. Research has proven that menthol tobacco products contribute to tobacco-related health disparities.

Unfortunately, for decades the federal government has failed to address the threat posed by flavored tobacco products. Weak federal rules still allow the tobacco industry to use kid-friendly menthol, candy and fruit flavors to attract the next generation of tobacco users. By prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products, Minnesota would join leading states striving to reverse the youth nicotine epidemic and reduce health care costs.

On behalf of Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation, thank you for considering this important policy to reduce youth tobacco addiction. We hope we can count on your support.

Sincerely,



Molly Moilanen
Co-Chair, Minnesotans for a
Smoke-Free Generation
Vice President, ClearWay MinnesotaSM



Janelle Waldock
Co-Chair, Minnesotans for a
Smoke-Free Generation
Senior Director of Policy, Blue Cross and Blue
Shield of Minnesota

About Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation is a coalition of more than 60 organizations that share a common goal of saving Minnesota youth from a lifetime of addiction to tobacco. The coalition supports policies that reduce youth smoking and nicotine addiction, including increasing tobacco prices, raising the tobacco sale age to 21, limiting access to candy-, fruit- and menthol-flavored tobacco, and funding tobacco prevention and cessation programs.

Partners include: The African American Leadership Forum, Allina Health, Allina Health | Aetna, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association in Minnesota, Apple Tree Dental, Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota, Aurora/St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation, Becker County Energized, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation, Cancer Legal Care, CentraCare, Children’s Defense Fund-MN, Children’s Minnesota, ClearWay MinnesotaSM, Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio – CLUES, Dodge County Public Health, Education Minnesota, Essentia Health, Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare, A Healthier Southwest, HealthPartners, Hennepin Healthcare, Horizon Public Health, Indigenous Peoples Task Force, ISAI AH, JustUs Health, LAAMPP Alumni, Lake Region Healthcare, Local Public Health Association of Minnesota, LPCFC – Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative, March of Dimes, Mayo Clinic, Medica, Meeker McLeod Sibley Community Health Services, Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers, Minnesota Cancer Alliance, Minnesota Council of Health Plans, MHA – Minnesota Hospital Association, Minnesota Medical Association, Minnesota Nurses Association, Minnesota Oral Health Coalition, Minnesota Public Health Association, MNAAP – Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, ModelCities, NAMI Minnesota, North Memorial Health, NorthPoint Health & Wellness, Olmsted Medical Center, Open Cities Health Center, PartnerSHIP 4 Health, Perham Health & Living, Preventing Tobacco Addiction Foundation, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, ShiftMN, St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, Steele County Public Health, Tobacco-Free Alliance, Twin Cities Medical Society, UCare, Vision In Living Life – Change is Possible, WellShare International and Zumbro Valley Medical Society. Find out more at: smokefreegenmn.org.