



February 15, 2021

Dear House Preventive Health Policy Division Committee members:

I am writing on behalf of the American Heart Association to express our support of HF 904, a bill that would prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products.

Flavored tobacco products are a key reason Minnesota is facing a youth nicotine epidemic. We've seen an increase in youth tobacco use for the first time in 17 years. This spike is mainly attributed to the popularity of e-cigarettes and kid friendly flavors the industry uses to attract youth.

In Minnesota, 67 percent of current high-school tobacco users reported using a flavored product. Flavored tobacco, including Menthol are peddled to our nation's youth with the intent of addicting a new generation, luring them into a deadly habit and sets them on the road to early hardening of the arteries and coronary artery disease in adulthood. Flavorings in e-liquids are shown to be harmful when inhaled and can inflame and damage airway and lung tissue.

In January 2020, the President and FDA released a weakened version of a flavored tobacco policy, which only includes a temporary ban on some pod-based, candy-flavored e-cigarettes. The federal rules exempt all menthol-flavored tobacco products and open-tank and disposable vaping products, all of which are popular among youth, and has led to a dramatic increase among flavored products still available.

Despite conclusive evidence that menthol adversely affects public health, the FDA continues to exempt menthol from the ban on flavored cigarettes and new e-cigarette rules. Removing the sale of all flavored tobacco products will help decrease the appeal and access to youth from purchasing these deadly products. Local restrictions on flavored tobacco products have shown these policies limit availability and reduce the chance that teens will ever try tobacco products.

We need to continue to do everything we can to protect the health of our young people and prevent another generation from becoming lifelong tobacco users. I urge you to support HF 904.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jess Nolan", written over a horizontal line.

Jess Nolan
Government Relations Director
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