

Hi Laura,

My name is Joe Zerka. I am the owner of A to Z Tobacco in South Minneapolis and Dale Tobacco in St. Paul. I employ several individuals at my two tobacco stores who have families and depend on my businesses staying open. Bill HF904, which would ban the sale of flavored tobacco, is wrong and will not do good to our communities.

I opened A to Z Tobacco in my family's gas station, Stop N Shop, located at 3050 1st Ave S. Minneapolis, MN 55408 on July 23, 2018. The menthol ban in Minneapolis went into effect on August 1, 2018. If I did not open my tobacco store, my family's gas station which has been open since 1997 would be closed right now. People who purchase products at our store do not just get flavored tobacco. They get chips, pop, coffee, lottery products, groceries, etc. which are what keep our business alive. That tobacco store is the only reason we are still open. It drives customers to us. The same goes for Dale Tobacco. The tobacco store is crucial to keep the grocery store, Speedy Food, which is attached to the tobacco store, open.

We are able to employ several individuals and keep their families fed because of our tobacco store. People who use flavored tobacco will only go to other state to purchase their products. This ban will hurt Minnesotans. Let us continue to sell legal products.

I am always available to discuss this over the phone. Please feel free to call me. 763-807-8128.

Thank you,  
Joe