

Hi,

I'm a local business owner in Hennepin County. I've been doing business in this county for over 14 years now, since graduating college at the University of Minnesota. Much like many of my counterparts in the tobacco industry the ban of menthol, mint, and flavored tobacco products is of great concern to me. I understand the efforts to help people quit smoking and to eliminate the growth of our industry. I have looked into the studies and listened in to many of the conversations even here at the local municipality levels.

However the fact of the matter is that people are going to choose to smoke regardless of what is banned and not banned. All these rules do is continue to push our consumers to go to unsafe black markets, and online shopping. Which drives business away from our retail stores. If you ban menthol at the state level consumers will just go online for it. Causing the loss of revenue and the loss of jobs at the community level.

That is what hurts me the most in the end. When I opened my businesses I did so with the thought that I was joining a community. I was not just opening up my doors to just take money from people and turn a profit. I was opening a shop to support a community, to provide products for them at a safe and convenient location, to donate to the local schools, and police departments, to provide good paying jobs to local citizens. I currently employ 2 local citizens that walk to work from just a few blocks away. At my father's shop across the city he employs 6 local citizens that rely on the store for their main or supplemental form of income.

These job losses at the small time shops and local level would be devastating especially on the heels of the Corona virus where the country has already been devastated with record high unemployment. The ban of these products also hurts low income and black communities the most. The same communities that have been completely destroyed by riots, and a pandemic in 2020.

These thoughts are without regard to my own form of income and the ability for me to provide for my wife and two children. The loss of revenue would almost certainly put me out of business, right at the time where my family and I need it most.

So please understand that banning these products at the state level would only hurt local businesses. Many of which higher local citizens to work there. Consumers of these products will just flock to the border or turn to online retailers who will ship it directly to their house. Some of them will even turn to unregulated black markets that do not pay taxes to the state and will sell to anyone, even minors or people under under age of 21.

So please do not ban menthol, mint, and flavored tobacco products. Think of all the job losses, tax revenue losses, and negative impact it will have on communities as a whole.

Thank you