

March 1, 2023

RE: SF2123



Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members:

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation is a coalition of more than 50 organizations that share a common goal of advancing justice by striving toward a future where every person is free from commercial tobacco's harms and can reach their full health potential.

Our coalition supports SF2123, which would end the sale of menthol and all flavored tobacco products in Minnesota. Removing flavored tobacco products – including menthol cigarettes, flavored cigars, e-cigarettes, hookah and smokeless tobacco – from the marketplace will prevent youth addiction and improve health for all Minnesotans. The policy will especially benefit communities targeted by the tobacco industry – including youth, Black Americans, LGBTQ+ people and American Indians.

Flavors are driving the state's youth tobacco epidemic. The [2022 Minnesota Student Survey](#) found that over 75 percent of Minnesota's 8th and 11th graders who use tobacco report using flavored products. According to doctors and health experts, tobacco use sets kids up for a lifetime of nicotine addiction and serious health conditions like heart disease and cancer. Minnesota has been a leader in tobacco prevention policies and a quarter of the state's population is already covered by [28 local policies](#) restricting sales of flavored and/or menthol tobacco products.

Removing menthol and flavored tobacco from the marketplace will address health disparities caused by Big Tobacco's lethal tactics. Menthol tobacco products are aggressively marketed not only toward youth, but also to Black Americans, women and LGBTQ+ communities. For decades, tobacco companies have channeled menthol tobacco products into Black communities in particular, causing premature death and disease. In Minnesota, smoking rates among American Indians are at epidemic levels (59 percent), and 42 percent of urban American Indian people who smoke use menthol cigarettes.

A recent statewide scientific poll found 70 percent of Minnesota residents are concerned about vaping, smoking and other tobacco use among Minnesota youth. And 62 percent of Minnesota residents support the proposal to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products. Support is strong across political, geographic and demographic lines.

The economic burden associated with smoking is staggering, costing our state over \$3 billion in excess medical costs. Minnesota can take steps to reverse the youth tobacco epidemic, address health disparities and reduce health care costs by ending the sale of flavored tobacco products. On behalf of Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation, we hope we can count on your support.

Sincerely,

Emily Myatt

Tri-Chair, Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation

Minnesota Government Relations Director, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

LaTrisha Vetaw

Tri-Chair, Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation

Janelle Waldock

Tri-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 50 organizations that share a common goal of advancing justice by striving toward a future where every person is free from commercial tobacco's harms and can reach their full health potential.

Advocates for Better Health, A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation, Allina Health, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association in Minnesota, Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Cancer Legal Care, CentraCare, Children's Minnesota, Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio – CLUES, Dodge County Public Health, Essentia Health, Eugene Nichols, Faribault Martin & Watonwan Co SHIP, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare, HealthPartners, Hennepin County Public Health, Hennepin Healthcare, Horizon Public Health, Indigenous Peoples Task Force, Lao Center of Minnesota, Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative, Local Public Health Association of Minnesota, Masonic Cancer Center, University of Minnesota, Mayo Clinic, Medica, Meeker McLeod Sibley Community Health Services, MHA – Minnesota Hospital Association, Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers, Minnesota Cancer Alliance, Minnesota Council of Health Plans, Minnesota Dental Association, Minnesota Medical Association, Minnesota Public Health Association, Minnesota Society for Public Health Education, Minnesota Youth Council, MNAAP – Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Mowery Communications, LLC, NAMI Minnesota, NorthPoint Health & Wellness, Olmsted Medical Center, Parents Against Vaping e-cigarettes, PartnerSHIP 4 Health, Perham Health, Public Health Law Center, Rainbow Health, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, Steele County Public Health, Tobacco-Free Alliance, Twin Cities Recovery Project, UCare, WellShare International, Winona County Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention

Find out more at: smokefreegenmn.org.