



March 29, 2023

House Health Finance and Policy

RE: HF2930

Dear Chair Liebling and Committee Members:

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation (MSFG) 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.

MSFG strongly supports two provisions included in the House Health Finance and Policy Omnibus Bill:

- **HF1574 (Bierman)** This language (Article 1, Sections 8, 20, and 27) ensures Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare enrollees receive comprehensive tobacco cessation treatment benefits without barriers and expands the types of providers that can be reimbursed for providing tobacco treatment counseling.

While Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare provides coverage for some guidelines-based tobacco cessation treatment, coverage is not comprehensive and barriers exist and change from year to year, creating confusion for patients and providers. Adding more provider types that can be reimbursed will increase health equity by expanding access to care in communities most impacted by tobacco use - rural Minnesota, Minnesotans living with mental health or substance use conditions, low-income Minnesotans, and in communities of color. Smoking costs our Medicaid program more than \$600 million every year. Removing barriers to quitting will save money and lives.

- **HF2422 (Her)** This language (Article 3, Sections 3 and 72) would dedicate any potential funds from the JUUL Lawsuit to youth tobacco prevention, help those addicted to commercial tobacco quit, and address tobacco-related health disparities. JUUL developed sleek-looking products with menthol and candy flavors designed to appeal to kids, with sky-high nicotine levels to addict users. Investigations found that JUUL used several pages from Big Tobacco's playbook and targeted kids as young as eight with a marketing program including summer camp, school programs and hundreds of social media influencers.

The 2022 Minnesota Student Survey found fourteen percent of 11th-graders and seven percent of 8th-graders reported currently using e-cigarettes. Especially concerning is the use of these products by youth reporting mental health challenges including stress, anxiety, and depression. The JUUL Lawsuit presents an opportunity to invest more state funds in tobacco prevention and treatment.

On behalf of Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation, thank you for including these important public health policies in your omnibus bill. We look forward to supporting your efforts in the weeks ahead to ensure this language is included in any final health omnibus bill.

Sincerely,

Emily Myatt

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