

February 12, 2020

Dear Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

On behalf of Children's Minnesota, I am writing to express our support for House File 3166- the "Vaping Awareness and Prevention Act" and House File 3164- which establishes vaping prevention pilot grants, both of which aim to reduce the prevalence of youth vaping.

Children's Minnesota is the state's largest provider of pediatric health care. We see children from all 87 counties and approximately 60 percent of the counties in the surrounding states. The community of patients treated at Children's is incredibly diverse and we are acutely aware of the health inequities and disparities that exist within our community and between our kids.

A recent report from the Centers for Disease Control highlights the racial and ethnic disparities in the use of tobacco products among middle and high school students and notes that, often, specific racial and ethnic groups are targeted by the tobacco industry's advertising efforts. This makes comprehensive tobacco policies necessary as we work to address these disparities and promote health equity for all youth and teens living in our state.

Research has shown that the developing teenage brain is particularly vulnerable to the addictive effects of nicotine and that youth who use a tobacco product, such as e-cigarettes, are more likely to go on to use other tobacco products. The most recent Minnesota Student Survey showed that approximately 25 percent of 11th graders used e-cigarettes and vaping products; an alarming number that demands a rapid and comprehensive response.

Children's Minnesota has treated the majority of teens in the state with vaping related lung injuries including, severe lung damage and respiratory failure. For some of our patients, they may not fully recover. While vaping has largely been marketed as a safer alternative to cigarettes, anyone who uses vapes is still putting nicotine into their body. Besides being highly addictive, nicotine is also toxic in high doses. It affects the brain, nervous system and raises blood pressure and heart rate. In rare cases, when large doses of nicotine are involved, arrhythmia (abnormal heart rate) can cause heart failure and death. Studies have also shown increases in nicotine poisoning cases in very young children from accidental exposure to e-cigarette solutions.

Children's Minnesota vision is to be "every family's essential partner in raising healthier children;" that means both inside and outside our clinic walls. We look forward to working with you further to pass legislation and policies that ensure the health and well-being of our children.

Sincerely,

Kelly Wolfe

Director of Public Affairs and Advocacy

