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February 15, 2021

Minnesota House Preventive Health Policy Division

Dear Chair Freiberg and Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Twin Cities Medical Society to **express strong support for HF904**. The Twin Cities Medical Society is an organization that represents approximately 4,500 physicians and medical students living and working in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. Our physician members share all too often that tobacco is still a problem for their patients. In fact, tobacco use remains the #1 cause of preventable disease and death in Minnesota and is a significant driver of health inequities. Tobacco use also costs Minnesota \$3 billion in health care costs each year¹.

Flavored tobacco products have long been a driver of youth tobacco initiation. For decades, the tobacco industry aggressively marketed menthol cigarettes – which make it easier to begin smoking and harder to quit – to Black individuals, the LGBTQ community, and youth. Today, e-cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products like cigarillos have caused youth tobacco use in Minnesota to rise for the first time in 17 years. In 2017, over 15,000 e-cigarette flavors were available, including kid friendly flavors like cotton candy and root beer float ².

Our physician members have been proud to support policies clearing the market of flavored tobacco products in Arden Hills, Edina, Golden Valley, Lilydale, Minneapolis, Mendota Heights, Roseville, and St. Paul. We hope that the state of Minnesota will soon act upon this serious health issue as well.

A flavor restriction including menthol will protect future generations' health and well-being from the harms of tobacco and address an important driver of health inequities and chronic disease. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Traxler", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sarah Traxler, MD, MS, FACOG
President of the Twin Cities Medical Society

¹ ClearWay Minnesota

² Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids