



February 15, 2021

Chair Rep. Frieberg and Members
Preventive Health Policy Division
Minnesota House of Representatives

Chair Freiberg and Members of the Committee:

This letter is in support of HF 904, ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Minnesota. These measures will help protect youth from the addiction and health harms associated with tobacco use. Minnesota Cancer Alliance strongly supports this action to adopt this law.

The Minnesota Cancer Alliance (MCA) is committed to reducing the burden of cancer for all people living in Minnesota. We are a coalition of over 100 organizations from across the state dedicated to reducing the burden of cancer across the continuum: from prevention and detection, to treatment, survivorship, and end-of-life care. Our members include Sanford Health, Colon Cancer Coalition, Minnesota Society of Clinical Oncology, Be The Match, and the American Indian Cancer Foundation— to name just a few.

Tobacco is the leading preventable cause of cancer, and cancer is the leading cause of death among Minnesotans. Youth tobacco and e-cigarette use continues to be a growing problem. Flavored tobacco is very appealing to kids, leading them to a lifetime of addiction. In 2019, youth use rates again rose from 1 in 5 to 1 in 4 using in the last 30 days, an unfortunate trend that continued from 2017. Menthol is particularly problematic because it cools the throat, masking the harshness and, making makes it easier for young people to start smoking. Research shows that adding menthol to tobacco makes it harder to quit. The tobacco industry has used flavored products for decades to entice new users, making heaps of money and heaping the cost of tobacco use onto Minnesota's taxpayers.

The tobacco industry has effectively targeted African Americans with menthol tobacco advertising and promotion. The result is higher use rates, lower quit rates and higher health disparities. More than 72,000 Black Americans are diagnosed with a tobacco-related cancer and more than 39,000 died from a tobacco-related cancer annually in the U.S. from 2004-2013. Lung cancer is the second most common cancer among African Americans, but the leading cause of cancer deaths. This issue cannot and should not be ignored.

You have the opportunity to protect Minnesota's young, BIPOC and LGBTQ residents from the burdens of addiction and a myriad of cancers and other chronic diseases. Please support HF904

Thank you for your commitment to reduce the cancer burden in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Anne Snowden
Chair, Minnesota Cancer Alliance Steering Committee

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