



May 4, 2021

Taxes Conference Committee

RE: HF991 (Omnibus Tax Bill)

Dear Conference Committee Members:

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation is a coalition of more than 60 organizations working to reduce youth tobacco use and end tobacco's harm for good. We are united behind policies that reduce youth smoking and nicotine addiction. **Our coalition supports new, ongoing investments in tobacco prevention.**

Thank you for taking important steps to reverse the youth tobacco epidemic and address tobacco-related health disparities. Specifically, thank you to both chambers for dedicating existing cigarette tax revenue to tobacco prevention and treatment. The House bill includes \$15 million in ongoing funding and the Senate bill includes \$5 million in one-time funding. In addition, we support closing tax loopholes on e-cigarette devices since price can be a powerful tool to reduce youth tobacco use.

For more than two decades ClearWay Minnesota<sup>SM</sup>, the foundation created with 3 percent of the tobacco settlement, has provided the majority of funding for tobacco prevention in Minnesota. These investments have paid off, saving thousands of lives and billions of dollars.

If Minnesota invests in tobacco control at the same or greater levels over the next 20 years, the state will prevent an additional 14,063 smoking-attributable deaths, reduce smoking-attributable medical spending by \$10.2 billion and increase paid and unpaid productivity by \$9.4 billion.

Investing in tobacco prevention and treatment is an important step and there is ample tobacco revenue collected by the state. At the end of March, two tobacco companies paid Minnesota \$81 million in settlement back payments – and those companies will pay at least \$10 million a year going forward. Those payments are on top of the nearly \$760 million Minnesota collected last year in tobacco revenue (\$607 million in taxes and \$152 million in settlement fees). Minnesota spent only 1 percent of that total on tobacco prevention and treatment.

The state should continue investing in proven strategies to reduce youth tobacco use and help smokers quit. Dedicating cigarette tax revenue to prevention and treatment is a common-sense way to address concerning youth tobacco use. This approach is popular among Minnesota residents – a 2020 poll found that 64 percent of Minnesotans support increasing state funding for youth tobacco prevention by \$15 million a year.

**As the Conference Committee continues to discuss and finalize the omnibus tax bill, we urge you to protect health and Minnesota kids by including ongoing investments in tobacco prevention and treatment efforts as included in the House proposal.**

Minnesota is a stronger and healthier state when our kids grow up free from tobacco addiction.

Sincerely,



Molly Moilanen  
Co-Chair, Minnesotans for a  
Smoke-Free Generation  
Vice President, ClearWay Minnesota<sup>SM</sup>



Janelle Waldock  
Co-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 60 organizations that share a common goal of saving Minnesota youth from a lifetime of addiction to tobacco. The coalition supports policies that reduce youth smoking and nicotine addiction, including increasing tobacco prices, ending the sale of menthol and all flavored tobacco products, and funding tobacco prevention and treatment programs.

Partners include: The African American Leadership Forum, Allina Health, Allina Health | Aetna, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association in Minnesota, Apple Tree Dental, Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota, Aurora/St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation, Becker County Energized, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation, Cancer Legal Care, CentraCare, Children’s Defense Fund-MN, Children’s Minnesota, ClearWay Minnesota<sup>SM</sup>, Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio – CLUES, Dodge County Public Health, Education Minnesota, Essentia Health, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare, A Healthier Southwest, HealthPartners, Hennepin Healthcare, Horizon Public Health, Indigenous Peoples Task Force, ISAI AH, JustUs Health, LAAMPP Alumni, Lake Region Healthcare, Local Public Health Association of Minnesota, LPCFC – Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative, March of Dimes, Mayo Clinic, Medica, Meeker McLeod Sibley Community Health Services, Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers, Minnesota Cancer Alliance, Minnesota Council of Health Plans, MHA – Minnesota Hospital Association, Minnesota Medical Association, Minnesota Nurses Association, Minnesota Oral Health Coalition, Minnesota Public Health Association, MNAAP – Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, ModelCities, NAMI Minnesota, North Memorial Health, NorthPoint Health & Wellness, Olmsted Medical Center, Open Cities Health Center, Parents Against Vaping e-cigarettes (PAVe), PartnerSHIP 4 Health, Perham Health & Living, Preventing Tobacco Addiction Foundation, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, ShiftMN, St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, Steele County Public Health, Tobacco-Free Alliance, Twin Cities Medical Society, UCare, Vision In Living Life – Change is Possible, WellShare International and Zumbro Valley Medical Society. Find out more at: [smokefreegenmn.org](http://smokefreegenmn.org).