



April 8, 2024

Re.: Support for House File 4251

Dear Chair Stevenson and Committee Members

On behalf of the American Lung Association in Minnesota, I am writing to express our support for HF4251, which would prohibit the sale of flavored cannabis that is burned, inhaled, or vaporized.

The American Lung Association is the oldest voluntary health organization in the United States. For more than 120 years, the Lung Association has been working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through education, advocacy, and research. The Lung Association works on behalf of the 37 million Americans living with lung diseases. We are concerned about the health impacts of marijuana use, especially on lung health when it is vaped or smoked.

For decades, the tobacco industry, which is heavily invested in the cannabis industry, has used flavors to attract youth. Indeed, the industry's decades-long conspiracy to deceive the public includes many documents that demonstrate the industry's understanding of the role flavors play in kids starting to use tobacco products. Flavors are one of the main reasons kids use tobacco products and have played a big role in the youth vaping epidemic. Research shows that 81% of kids who have ever used tobacco products started with a flavored product. Youth also cite flavors as a major reason for their current use of tobacco products.ⁱ

The many public health lessons learned from our work around commercial tobacco can and should be considered when amending the recreational cannabis law to protect youth, promote public health and assuring issues around health equity are addressed.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony and your attention to addressing the issue before us. With a vision of a world free of lung disease, the American Lung Association supports strong prevention policies. We hope we can count on your support for HF4251 to restrict the sale of flavored cannabis that is burned, inhaled, or vaporized without penalties for purchase use or possession.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat McKone".

Pat McKone, Senior Director

Public Policy and Advocacy

American Lung Association in Minnesota

ⁱ Flavored Tobacco Products Attract Kids: Brief Overview of Key Issues. Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0399.pdf> Accessed January 29, 2021.



April 8, 2024

House Health Finance and Policy Committee
RE: HF4251

Dear Chair Liebling and Committee Members:

The Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota (ANSR) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the human and economic costs of commercial tobacco, nicotine and other drug use in Minnesota. ANSR has supported strong public policies that protect Minnesotans from tobacco industry targeting and reduce commercial tobacco-related health disparities for over 50 years.

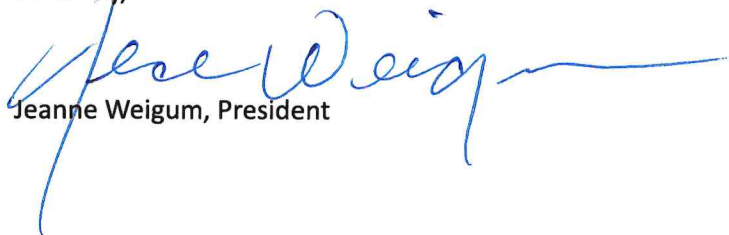
Our organization supports HF4251, which would prohibit the sale of all flavored cannabis that is burned, inhaled or vaporized.

ANSR has worked for decades on preventing nicotine addiction, and we have tried to keep the tobacco industry from using predatory tactics to lure young people into commercial tobacco use. Through that work we have learned a good deal about what people selling nicotine and similar products do to attract new customers. One of the most powerful tools in the industry's arsenal is flavors. Flavors hook kids, whether it is a strawberry-flavored banana vape, a cherry-flavored little cigar, or a mint-flavored Zyn nicotine pouch. The nicotine industry has gotten by with this ploy for years, and now we fear the cannabis industry will follow their playbook.

Now is the time for prevention. Prevent the industry from marketing chocolate-, mint- or berry-flavored cannabis because we know that will be attractive to youth. Prevent it now before it becomes a 'thing' we need to play catch up to deal with.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Weigum, President



ADVOCATES FOR
BETTER HEALTH

April 8, 2024
House Health Finance and Policy Committee
RE: HF4251

Dear Chair Lieblich and Committee Members:

I am writing to you as an Infectious Disease physician and President of Advocates for Better Health (ABH), an organization dedicated to fostering a healthy, equitable, and thriving state through community-driven public health initiatives. Our healthcare provider advocates witness firsthand the detrimental effects of commercial tobacco on our communities. Therefore, we firmly believe it is time for Minnesota to end the sale of all flavored commercial tobacco products throughout the state.

We are in full support of HF4251, which aims to prohibit the sale of flavored cannabis that is burned, inhaled, or vaporized. We extend our sincere gratitude to Representative Her for carrying this crucial public health legislation.

The tobacco industry exploits flavored tobacco products to target adolescents, whose developing brains are particularly susceptible to nicotine addiction. We are deeply concerned that the cannabis industry will use similar tactics to entice young people, the Black community, American Indians, and the LGBTQ+ community. The allure of flavored products poses a significant threat, and therefore, prohibiting flavored cannabis from the market is an essential preventive measure that will enhance community health and save lives.

We urge you to support HF4251, which seeks to end the sale of flavored cannabis that is burned, inhaled, or vaporized without imposing penalties for purchase, use, or possession.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We trust in your commitment to prioritizing the well-being of our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Etienne Djevi'.

M. Etienne Djevi, MD
Advocates for Better Health
President

April 9, 2024

RE: HF4251



Dear Chair Liebling and committee members:

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation 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.

Our coalition supports HF4251, which would prohibit the sale of flavored cannabis that is burned, inhaled, or vaporized without penalties for purchase, use, or possession. We want to thank Representative Her for carrying this important public health legislation.

Commercial tobacco prevention and treatment advocates have worked for years to implement policies that reduce the burden of commercial tobacco and address tobacco-related health disparities in all Minnesota communities. There are many public health lessons and policies learned from commercial tobacco work that can be considered when amending recreational cannabis law to promote public health, protect kids, and advance health equity. Prohibiting the sale of flavored cannabis products that are burned, inhaled, or vaped is just one of them. As commercial tobacco prevention advocates working diligently to prohibit the sale of menthol and flavored commercial tobacco, it is imperative to have consistency in the market between commercial tobacco and cannabis.

Tobacco companies are investing heavily in the cannabis industry. This is concerning given what we know about the tobacco industry's predatory marketing practices that target youth, low-income communities, Black Minnesotans, American Indians, and the LGBTQIA2S+ communities. The cannabis industry is borrowing from Big Tobacco's playbook, creating flavored and highly appealing products aimed at attracting young people and masking the harshness of a product.

From our work around commercial tobacco policy and treatment, we know menthol (mint) and other candy and fruit flavors make products more appealing and mask the taste of tobacco, making it easier to start and harder to quit. We urge the legislature to pass this bill, along with HF2177 (Cha), which would end the sale of all commercial flavored tobacco products.

Sincerely,

Emily Myatt

Tri-Chair, Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation

Minnesota Government Relations Director, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

LaTrisha Vetaw

Tri-Chair, Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation

Janelle Waldock

Tri-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 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.

Advocates for Better Health, A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation, Allina Health, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association in Minnesota, Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Cancer Legal Care, CentraCare, Children's Minnesota, Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio – CLUES, Dodge County Public Health, Essentia Health, Eugene Nichols, Faribault Martin & Watonwan Co SHIP, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare, HealthPartners, Hennepin County Public Health, Hennepin Healthcare, Horizon Public Health, Indigenous Peoples Task Force, Lao Center of Minnesota, Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative, Local Public Health Association of Minnesota, Masonic Cancer Center, University of Minnesota, Mayo Clinic, Medica, Meeker McLeod Sibley Community Health Services, MHA – Minnesota Hospital Association, Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers, Minnesota Cancer Alliance, Minnesota Council of Health Plans, Minnesota Dental Association, Minnesota Medical Association, Minnesota Public Health Association, Minnesota Society for Public Health Education, Minnesota Youth Council, MNAAP – Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Mowery Communications, LLC, NAMI Minnesota, NorthPoint Health & Wellness, Olmsted Medical Center, Parents Against Vaping e-cigarettes, PartnerSHIP 4 Health, Perham Health, Public Health Law Center, Rainbow Health, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, Steele County Public Health, Tobacco-Free Alliance, Twin Cities Recovery Project, UCare, WellShare International, Winona County Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention

Find out more at: smokefreegenmn.org.

RE: Support for HF4251

April 8, 2024



Dear Chair Liebling and Members of the House Health Committee:

The Tobacco-Free Alliance is a Twin Cities nonprofit organization with the mission to prevent youth from using commercial tobacco, prioritizing communities adversely affected by industry marketing and health disparities. We are writing to urge you to support HF4251, which would prohibit the sale of flavored cannabis that is burned, inhaled, or vaporized.

As an organization deeply invested in the health and well-being of youth and communities, we believe it is imperative to apply the knowledge and lessons learned from years of tobacco prevention and treatment advocacy to address the emerging challenges posed by the cannabis industry. We speak to hundreds of middle and high school students each school year about the harms caused by vaping nicotine and cannabis, and we work with school administrators who see this problem on a daily basis. We know from these conversations, how prevalent these problems are, and flavors are the common denominator.

Drawing from our extensive work around commercial tobacco education and policy, we understand the detrimental impact of menthol (mint) and other candy and fruit flavors on tobacco use. These flavors not only make products more appealing to youth but also make it harder for individuals to quit using them. It is essential that we apply this knowledge to prevent similar patterns from emerging within the cannabis industry.

An urgent concern is the significant investment by tobacco companies in the cannabis industry. Following Big Tobacco's playbook, the cannabis industry is introducing flavored products to attract young people and conceal the risks of inhaling these harmful substances. This trend is troubling, especially considering the tobacco industry's documented history of targeting vulnerable groups such as youth, low-income communities, Black Minnesotans, American Indians, and the LGBTQIA2S+ communities. The cannabis industry's adoption of similar tactics demands immediate action.

The efforts of commercial tobacco prevention advocates have been instrumental in reducing the burden of commercial tobacco and addressing tobacco-related health disparities across all communities in Minnesota. It is crucial that we leverage this invaluable experience to promote public health, protect our youth, and advance health equity as we navigate the complexities of recreational cannabis regulation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elyse L. Less". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Elyse Levine Less, JD, MPH
Executive Director, Tobacco-Free Alliance