

February 16, 2021

Ms. Taken-Holtze,

I am writing to you in regards to the proposed State of Minnesota menthol/flavor ban.

I am a retailer whose livelihood depends on the sales of these products.

I am not disagreeing that smoking is hazardous. I am simply saying that this ban will not make people quit smoking menthol or flavors. They will just have to get them other places. By doing that, our state's businesses will be closing due to the lack of revenue and our state stands to lose \$209 million in taxes alone from this ban.

The city of Minneapolis specifically cannot afford to lose this revenue as we are still trying to recover from the effects of CoronaVirus and all the devastation from the protests and looting last May.

By banning these products it will just create another opportunity for the black market. Minnesota already is currently ranked 5th in the country for smuggling tobacco products. Cigarette tax avoidance and evasion has an estimated smuggling rate at 35.77% with over 81,000 packs of cigarettes smuggled into Minnesota, which represents a tax loss of \$239,492,098.

We buy and sell these products legally, and responsibly and pay the required taxes on them. Isn't that better than creating that street market for these products where they are not paying taxes and they are not asking for ID?

I know it is difficult to be in an office and behind a desk and make laws and decisions for those of us out here, that's why I found it extremely necessary for me to write you to inform you of the devastating effects this ban would have on our livelihood, our states financial situation and the safety of our streets and products sold on them.

Respectfully,

Cynthia Awaijane  
Stop N Shop Tobacco  
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