



May 3, 2023

RE: SF2995

Dear Chair Wiklund, Chair Liebling and Committee Members:

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation (MSFG) 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. It is with these goal in mind that we provide the following comments on both the Senate and House Health and Human Services omnibus budget bills.

- MSFG thanks the Senate and House for including language (Senate Article 4, Sections 3 and 35 and House Article 3, Sections 3 and 70) to dedicate any potential funds from the JUUL lawsuit to youth tobacco prevention, help those addicted to commercial tobacco quit, and address tobacco-related health disparities. JUUL developed sleek-looking products with menthol and candy flavors designed to appeal to kids, with sky-high nicotine levels to addict users. Investigations found that JUUL used several pages from Big Tobacco's playbook and targeted kids as young as eight with a marketing program including summer camp, school programs and hundreds of social media influencers.

The 2022 Minnesota Student Survey found fourteen percent of 11th-graders and seven percent of 8th-graders reported currently using e-cigarettes. Especially concerning is the use of these products by youth reporting mental health challenges including stress, anxiety, and depression. The JUUL lawsuit presents an opportunity to invest more state funds in tobacco prevention and treatment.

- MSFG supports House language (Article 1, Sections 23 and 31) to ensure Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare enrollees receive comprehensive tobacco cessation treatment benefits without barriers and expands the types of providers that can be reimbursed for providing tobacco treatment counseling.

While Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare provides coverage for some guidelines-based tobacco cessation treatment, coverage is not comprehensive and barriers exist and change from year to year, creating confusion for patients and providers. Adding more provider types that can be reimbursed will increase health equity by expanding access to care in communities most impacted by tobacco use - rural Minnesota, Minnesotans living with mental health or substance use conditions, low-income Minnesotans, and in communities of color. Smoking costs our Medicaid program more than \$600 million every year. Removing barriers to quitting will save money and lives.

On behalf of Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation, thank you for considering these important public health policies as you put together a final Health and Human Services omnibus bill.

Sincerely,

Emily Myatt

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