

BEAUTIFUL LIE UGLY TRUTH

ABOUT MENTHOL TOBACCO

February 16, 2021

Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. De. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Freiberg and Members of the Preventive Health Policy Division Committee,

In 2015, a group of more than 50 health and community organizations came together to form the Menthol Coalition. Our goal was to take local action to protect communities across our state from the harms of menthol tobacco. The menthol coalition strongly supports ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products including mint, mentol and wintergreen flavors in the state of Minnesota.

Fruit and candy flavored tobacco products, including cigars, chew and e-cigarettes/e-juice come in a wide range of kid-friendly flavors, from grape and cotton candy to Skittles and Sour Patch Kids. The tobacco industry knows that most youth who use tobacco are using flavored products. That's because the sweet flavors mask the harshness of tobacco.

We applaud your bold stance in including menthol in your flavor restriction. Menthol is not just another flavor, it is THE money making flavor for the tobacco industry. They have spent decades marketing menthol tobacco to the African American and LGBTQ communities. As a result, 88% of African American adults who smoke use menthol products, compared to 25% of adult smokers overall. Menthol masks the harshness of smoke and studies show that the tobacco industry has manipulated menthol levels to attract younger smokers. Curbing menthol use and preventing young people from ever picking up the deadly habit is one of the most impactful ways we can reduce health disparities in the communities we serve.

Ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products will make a tremendous difference in assuring that youth aren't able to access these deadly products and set themselves up for a lifetime of addiction and disease. We urge Minnesota to continue promoting a healthy community by keeping tobacco products out of the hands of our children. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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