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*The mission of the Twin Cities Medical Society is to connect, represent, and engage physicians in improving the practice of medicine, policy development and public health initiatives.*

Representative Mike Freiberg, Chair, House Preventive Health Policy Division  
*Via Electronic Delivery*

March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Re: Support for HF1721 (Tobacco Tax Changes and Prevention Funding)**

Dear Chair Freiberg and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Twin Cities Medical Society in support of H.F. 1721, the proposed bill focusing on commercial tobacco that includes tobacco tax changes, and necessary funding for prevention and treatment. Twin Cities Medical Society (TCMS) is an organization that represents over 4,500 physicians and medical students living and working in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. Our physician members share all too often that commercial tobacco is still a matter of huge concern when it comes to the health of their patients. Tobacco use and tobacco-related illnesses are still the number one cause of death in Minnesota—and in the United States as a whole.

Youth tobacco use in Minnesota has risen for the first time in 17 years, in large part due to e-cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products. Exposure to nicotine during adolescence can cause life-long problems with learning, memory and attention. There is no safe amount of nicotine for young people, and tobacco unfortunately also harms many other Minnesotans.

House File 1721 includes necessary and overdue changes, including dedicating \$15 million to the Minnesota Department of Health specifically for tobacco treatment and prevention. This is money sorely needed and wanted by Minnesotans, both to help those who want to quit using tobacco products and to prevent more young people from becoming addicted in the first place. In addition to allocating funding for prevention, raising the price on products like e-cigarettes via tax increases is one of the most effective ways to prevent more young people from beginning to use these products. Dedicating funding to prevention and treatment, and changing the tax on tobacco products will ultimately save millions in health care costs and improve health outcomes for Minnesotans.

TCMS urges you to support this bill, which will save lives and improve the health landscape for all Minnesotans. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Traxler", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sarah Traxler, MD  
President of the Twin Cities Medical Society