



February 17, 2021

Minnesota House Preventive Health Policy Division

Dear Chair Freiberg and Committee Members:

On behalf of The Minnesota Youth Council (MYC), we are writing in support HF 904 which ends the sale of menthol and all flavored tobacco products in Minnesota. The MYC is the only legislative mandated youth council in the United States, and our members come from every congressional district in Minnesota. The MYC works to achieve equity in areas that impact youth such as juvenile justice, education inequities, and mental health, through legislative action, community outreach, and community education.

Big Tobacco deliberately uses flavors to attract our classmates to their deadly products. This targeting has led to 3.6 million kids using e-cigarettes nationwide. In Minnesota, a quarter of 11th graders use e-cigarettes and we see that in school environments every day. More than 80 percent of youth who ever tried tobacco started with a flavored tobacco product. The fruity, sweet and candy-like smell of e-cigarettes is familiar to any high schooler - that aroma is all around school. This is not experimentation; friends of ours are addicted to these high-nicotine products.

The FDA has the authority to regulate all tobacco products, but it's 2020 flavor policy fell short. The FDA's failure to remove all flavored e-cigarettes from the marketplace has led to dramatic increases among flavored products still available. These flavored products are driving the youth vaping epidemic and we need your help.

Further, the burden of tobacco-related disease disproportionately impacts Black, Indigenous, and LGBTQ communities, other Communities of Color, and low-income populations. This is because the tobacco industry targets these communities with advertising, coupons and flavors. We are greatly alarmed by this and ask that our community leaders take action.

On behalf of students across the state, we hope we can count on your support for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

The Minnesota Youth Council