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Coalition Launches Campaign to End Flavored Tobacco Sales in Minnesota

New Poll Finds 62 Percent of Minnesotans Support Ending Flavored Tobacco Sales to Protect Kids

ST. PAUL, Minn. – Today, Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation officially launched their 2023 campaign to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol products, in Minnesota. Late last week, the bipartisan legislation ([SF2123/HF2177](#)) was introduced in the Minnesota Legislature. The Senate Health and Human Services committee will [hear the bill on Wednesday, March 1 at 8:30 a.m.](#)

To support the lifesaving legislation, the coalition unveiled a media campaign and released the results of a new poll that shows Minnesota residents support ending the sale of flavored tobacco products by a 62 percent to 33 percent margin, with strong support across political and demographic lines. Removing flavored tobacco products – including menthol cigarettes, flavored cigars, e-cigarettes, hookah and smokeless tobacco – from the marketplace will prevent youth addiction and improve health for all Minnesotans. The policy will especially benefit communities targeted by the tobacco industry – including youth, Black Americans, LGBTQ+ people and American Indians.

“Every time Big Tobacco addicts another generation of kids, they put all taxpayers on the hook for billions of dollars in healthcare costs to treat tobacco-related diseases,” said **Emily Myatt, Minnesota Government Relations Director, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network and Tri-Chair of Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation.** “It’s time for Minnesota to pass a comprehensive law ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products to secure a healthier future for all of us.”

Flavors are driving the state’s youth tobacco epidemic. The [2022 Minnesota Student Survey](#) found that over 75 percent of Minnesota’s 8th and 11th graders who use tobacco report using flavored products. According to doctors and health experts, tobacco use sets kids up for a lifetime of nicotine addiction and serious health conditions like heart disease and cancer. Minnesota has been a leader in tobacco prevention policies and a quarter of the state’s population is already covered by [28 local policies](#) restricting sales of flavored and/or menthol tobacco products.

Bills Introduced in Senate and House

The companion bills ([SF2123/HF2177](#)) were officially introduced by Senate President Bobby Joe Champion of Minneapolis and Representative Ethan Cha of Woodbury. Coauthors include Republicans Senator Paul Utke of Grand Rapids and Representative Jeff Backer of Browns Valley. This is the fourth year a flavored tobacco sales bill has been in play at the Capitol. In past sessions, the bill was heard and passed through numerous committees and in 2020, the Minnesota House Select Committee on Racial Justice included the policy in its recommendations to address racial disparities.

“I’m proud to be carrying this bill, especially as we commemorate Black History Month,” **Senate President Champion** said. “The tobacco industry has used flavors to target our kids and my community for far too long.

Ending the sale of menthol cigarettes and all flavored products will go a long way toward building a healthier future for our kids, Black Minnesotans and our entire state.”

“As a parent, I’ve seen firsthand how the industry has attracted Minnesota kids with tobacco products in fruit, mint and candy flavors,” **Representative Cha** added. “Minnesota is ready to get this bill passed to improve health and stop the cycle of tobacco addiction that causes kids to become lifelong customers, costing us thousands of lives and billions in health care costs every year.”

Recent Polling Finds Strong Support

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation today released a January 2023 poll that found 70 percent of residents are concerned about vaping, smoking and other tobacco use among Minnesota youth. The survey found that 62 percent of Minnesota residents support “the proposal to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Minnesota,” including fruit, mint and candy flavored e-cigarettes, menthol-flavored cigarettes, flavored hookah tobacco and flavored chewing tobacco – versus 33 percent who oppose the policy. Among African American respondents, 68 percent support the policy to end flavored tobacco sales. The poll found strong support among people who identify as DFL, Republican and Independent.

“Menthol in particular makes it easier for kids to start smoking and harder for adults to quit,” said **Gene Nichols, a longtime community advocate** for stronger menthol tobacco laws. “Minnesota has been building power in Black communities to take on Big Tobacco, and we’re eager to get this lifesaving policy over the finish line. Ending flavored tobacco sales will create a future where kids are no longer hooked by flavors and families like mine no longer have to bury loved ones lost to smoking.”

The poll found that Minnesota residents agree by a more than two-to-one margin that “it is more important to protect kids and end the sale of flavored tobacco products to prevent kids from using them” than it is to “protect Minnesota small businesses by allowing them to sell flavored tobacco products.”

The poll was administered to 800 randomly selected adult residents in Minnesota by the Morris Leatherman Company between January 18 and February 2, 2023. View poll highlights and methodology details [here](#).

Paid Media Campaign Urges Minnesota to End Flavored Tobacco Sales

This month, Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation launched an advertising campaign urging Minnesota to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products. The campaign focuses on how flavors are used to attract kids and target Black, Indigenous and LGBTQ+ Minnesotans. The campaign website is FlavorsHookKidsMN.org.

“We look forward to working with lawmakers from all corners of the state and across the political spectrum to end flavored tobacco sales and put the health of all Minnesotans ahead of tobacco industry profits,” added **Janelle Waldock, Director of Racial and Health Equity Policy, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and Tri-Chair of Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation**. “Together we can promote healthier youth, advance justice and create a future free from commercial tobacco addiction.”

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation 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. The coalition’s flavored tobacco campaign is supported by the Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund.

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation partners include:

A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation, Advocates for Better Health, Allina Health, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association in Minnesota, Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Cancer Legal Care, CentraCare, Children’s Minnesota, Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio – CLUES, Dodge County Public Health, Essentia Health, Eugene Nichols, Faribault Martin & Watonwan Co SHIP, Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare, HealthPartners, Hennepin County Public Health, Hennepin Healthcare, Horizon Public Health, Indigenous Peoples Task Force, Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative, Local Public Health Association of Minnesota, Masonic Cancer Center, University of Minnesota, Mayo Clinic, Medica, Meeker McLeod Sibley Community Health Services, MHA – Minnesota Hospital Association, Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians,

Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers, Minnesota Cancer Alliance, Minnesota Council of Health Plans, Minnesota Dental Association, Minnesota Medical Association, Minnesota Public Health Association, Minnesota Society for Public Health Education, Minnesota Youth Council, MNAAP – Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Mowery Communications, LLC, NAMI Minnesota, NorthPoint Health & Wellness, Olmsted Medical Center, Parents Against Vaping e-cigarettes, PartnerSHIP 4 Health, Perham Health, Public Health Law Center, Rainbow Health, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, Steele County Public Health, Tobacco-Free Alliance, UCare, WellShare International, Winona County Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention.

Note: Tobacco in this release refers specifically to the use of manufactured, commercial tobacco products, and not to the sacred, medicinal and traditional use of tobacco by American Indians and other groups.

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