



March 24, 2023

RE: SF2520

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members:

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.

Our coalition supports SF2520 (Morrison), which would dedicate any potential funds from the JUUL Lawsuit to youth tobacco prevention, help addicted adults 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. Each JUUL 5-percent pod contains more nicotine than a pack of cigarettes. Investigations have 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.

In 2020, the State of Minnesota sued JUUL, Altria and four of its subsidiaries, taking a stand to protect consumers and the health of Minnesota's kids. The JUUL Lawsuit presents an opportunity to invest more state funds in tobacco prevention and treatment. JUUL settlement funds should help address the lasting impact of the e-cigarette epidemic and ease lasting health impacts of Big Tobacco's unjust targeting.

The [2022 Minnesota Student Survey](#) found fourteen percent of 11th-graders and seven percent of 8th-graders reported currently using e-cigarettes. Seven in 10 youth say they use e-cigarettes "because they come in flavors [they] like. Over one in five of Minnesota high school students who has tried e-cigarettes has never tried any conventional tobacco products. Recent evidence suggests that, compared to youth who have never used them, youth who have tried e-cigarettes are much more likely to start smoking in the future. Especially concerning is the use of these products by youth reporting mental health challenges including stress, anxiety, and depression.

Every year, Minnesota collects hundreds of millions in tobacco revenue and very little is dedicated to tobacco prevention and quit-smoking help. This past year, the state of Minnesota collected nearly \$800 million in tobacco taxes and settlement fees, but less than 1.5% (\$11.7 million) of that was spent on tobacco prevention and treatment. Investments in tobacco prevention and treatment save thousands of lives and billions of dollars.

Tobacco use remains Minnesota's leading cause of preventable death and disease, costing an estimated \$7 billion annually and taking the lives of more than 6,300 Minnesotans every year. Unfortunately, our progress to reduce tobacco use has been interrupted by the relentless tactics of the tobacco industry. Smoking rates in Minnesota had been declining for decades, but the adult cigarette smoking rate has stalled out at 14 percent, and for the first time in a generation youth tobacco use has increased.

A recent poll found 82 percent of Minnesota residents support dedicating potential funds from this lawsuit to proven commercial tobacco prevention and treatment programs. Tobacco prevention and cessation save money and lives, and it makes sense that any potential lawsuit funds be used for this purpose.

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation urges the committee to support this bill. Dedicating any JUUL lawsuit funds to tobacco prevention upholds our promise to Minnesota youth and helps combat tobacco addiction in all forms.

Sincerely,

Emily Myatt

*Tri-Chair, Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation*

*Minnesota Government Relations Director, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network*

LaTrisha Vetaw

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About Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation

*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.*

*Advocates for Better Health, A Breath of Hope Lung Foundation, 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, Lao Center of Minnesota, 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, Twin Cities Recovery Project, UCare, WellShare International, Winona County Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention*

*Find out more at: [smokefreegenmn.org](http://smokefreegenmn.org).*