

Resolution on Ending the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products

Call for advocacy, health education and promotion activities directed to end the sale of flavored tobacco products.

Adopted by the Minnesota Society for Public Health Education Board of Directors on January 8, 2021

Whereas, smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Minnesota, annually taking the lives of more than 6,300 Minnesotans and costing our state over \$7 billion in excess health care costs and lost productivity (1);

Whereas, an epidemic of e-cigarette use has disrupted a downward trend in youth tobacco use overall (2–4) and adult smoking rates have stalled at 14% of the state’s population (574,000 Minnesotans) (5);

Whereas, flavored tobacco products are a key reason Minnesota is facing a youth nicotine epidemic, with more than a quarter of 11th-graders and more than 1-in-10 8th-graders using e-cigarettes in the past month (6–7);

Whereas, from 2016 to 2019, youth e-cigarette rates nearly doubled among 8th-graders and rose 54% among 11th-graders (8–9);

Whereas, flavored products are extremely popular among youth with 83% of national youth e-cigarette users using a flavored e-cigarette in the past month (10) and two-thirds of Minnesota high-school tobacco users using flavored products (11);

Whereas, national data shows 37% of high school e-cigarette users use menthol products, and use of disposable e-cigarettes increased an 1,000% among high school e-cigarette users and 400% among middle school e-cigarette users from 2019 to 2020 (12);

Whereas, while flavored products may mask the harshness of tobacco, they are just as addictive and harmful as non-flavored tobacco products with flavorings in e-liquids being harmful when inhaled and inflaming and damaging airway and lung tissue (13–17);

Whereas, today’s e-cigarettes can deliver very high levels of nicotine, yet more than three-quarters of Minnesota 11th-graders believe e-cigarettes are not very risky (18);

Whereas, tobacco industry documents show efforts to market menthol products to African Americans, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer communities, and young people (19,20) leading to 88% of African American smokers (21) and 34% of adolescent smokers using menthol cigarettes (22);

Whereas, menthol flavoring makes it easier for kids to start smoking, harder for adults to quit and contributes to higher disease rates among African Americans (23–25);

Whereas, if menthol had been removed from the market in 2010 when the FDA removed all other cigarette flavors, by 2050 there would have been a 10% reduction in overall smoking prevalence and up to 633,252 lives would have been saved, a third of which would have been in the African American community (26);

Whereas, policies that restrict the sales of flavored tobacco products have been proven to limit availability and reduce the chance that teens will ever try tobacco products (27–29) and among Minnesota menthol smokers, approximately half reported they would quit smoking if menthol cigarettes were not sold (30);

Whereas, 19% of Minnesota communities have restricted flavored tobacco products in some form including major cities –St. Paul, Minneapolis and Duluth – and 5 communities completely prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products (31).

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Minnesota Society for Public Health Education (MN SOPHE) shall:

- I.** Support and encourage MN SOPHE members to engage in public health education that informs fellow members, other health professionals, employers, and the public about the importance of restricting and, in turn, ending the sale of flavored tobacco products;
- II.** Advocate and support local, state and federal legislation that aims to restrict or end the sale of flavored tobacco products;
- III.** Continue to build and strengthen its partnerships with other organizations and agencies that advocate for restricting and/or ending the sale of flavored tobacco products;
- IV.** MN SOPHE will partner with and endorse Minnesotans for a Smoke-free Generation programs, including educational classes, presentations, support groups, and outreach and advocacy.

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