

Dear Chair Kornheiser and Ways and Means Committee members,  
I am so pleased to write to you about this legislation, which is vital to the future of Vermont. Without healthy people we have nothing. I have been a physician and researcher at UVM / UVMMC for nearly 30 years, and my research is on cardiovascular prevention and racial disparities affecting Black Americans. As an expert in this area, I know the extreme danger imposed by flavored tobacco products, in particular the danger to our youth and to people of color. **Tobacco addiction is not a choice. It starts in our children**, who are vulnerable to getting hooked.

It is crystal clear that the flavors hook children on tobacco products and this leads to a lifetime of addiction, which in turn causes diseases you know about - lung cancer, heart disease, stroke etc. These diseases shorten the lifespan. Tobacco addiction is the #1 cause of preventable death. The math is clear, and action is needed to stop kids from being exposed to these harmful flavors that hook them in.

I also know that companies market menthol products specifically to people of color. They use targeted promotion towards these communities to get them hooked. This predatory practice enhances racial disparities in health, which have been pervasive in the United States ever since statistics have been kept. Look at the data in the chart here on the rising use of menthol products in Black adults. The pattern is the same in Black kids. It's all you need to see to know that menthol should be banned. **This is why the NAACP supports a national menthol ban.**

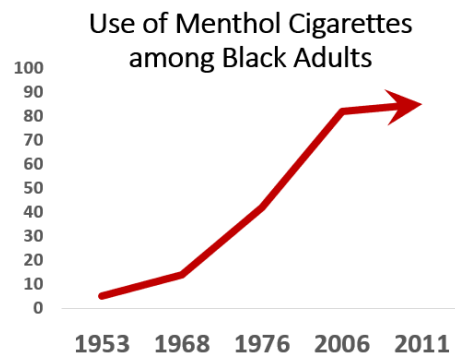
I am sure big tobacco is flooding the House with propaganda and spending tons of money to stop us in improving the health of Vermonters. It's not just about health. **Vermont spends \$404 million annually treating tobacco-caused diseases.** I also know that the Governor is likely to sign S.18 if it gets to his desk, and over 70% of Vermonters support the bill. Even with this overwhelming public support, some have said a ban takes away freedom of choice from people. However, protecting our children from premature death is simply more important.

Let's do this! **Please help our kids!** I look forward to following your deliberations and hope this bill passes, for the health and success of Vermonters. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

Thank you for this important work.

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