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The mission of the Twin Cities Medical Society is to connect, represent, and engage physicians in improving the practice of medicine, policy development and public health initiatives.

April 1st, 2022

Dear Mayor Mars and Shakopee City Council members,

My name is Zeke McKinney, and I am an Occupational Medicine physician practicing in the Twin Cities. I am writing on behalf of the Twin Cities Medical Society. The Twin Cities Medical Society is an organization that represents approximately 4,500 physicians and medical students living and working in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area. I am writing today to voice concerns of the proposed ordinance that would prohibit the sale of all flavored e-cigarettes and e-liquids in Shakopee, but does not go far enough in protecting the health of Shakopee residents. As a physician, I know all too well the critical harm commercial tobacco causes on the lives of patients and the community, and the opportunity elected officials have to mitigate this burden to health.

Flavored e-cigarettes and e-liquids come in sweet flavors, attractive packaging, and are low cost. Youth are introduced to tobacco use through flavors such as candy and fruit and perceive the products as less harmful than non-flavored products, even though they are just as dangerous and addictive as cigarettes. As a result, today we see increasing numbers of young people using tobacco, specifically e-cigarettes or vapes.

The current proposed ordinance stops short, and we urge you to include other flavored tobacco products such as cigars, chewing tobacco and menthol flavoring in your policy efforts. The tobacco industry has been documented to target the Black community, LGBTQ people, women, and youth with menthol tobacco marketing. Menthol is detrimental to the health of these communities, and we have seen disproportionate results in tobacco-related illnesses. Expanding this ordinance to include other flavored tobacco products will send a clear message to Shakopee residents and the tobacco industry that we do not tolerate injustices and inequities.

Please act by prohibiting the sale of all flavored tobacco products including menthol in Shakopee. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Z McKinney", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Zeke McKinney, MD, MHI, MPH