



DATE 20 Feb 2022

To: Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection

Re: Strong Support for SB 3118 RELATING TO TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Hrg: 22 Feb 2022, 10:00 AM conference room 229 & Videoconference

The Hawai'i Public Health Association (HPHA) is a group of over 450 community members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. Our mission is to promote public health in Hawai'i through leadership, collaboration, education and advocacy. Additionally, HPHA aims to call attention to issues around social justice and equity in areas that extend beyond the traditional context of health (e.g., education, digital equity, cultural sensitivity), which can have profound impacts on health equity and well-being. As stewards of public health, HPHA is also advocating for equity in all policies.

HPHA strongly supports SB 3118, which intends to prohibit the sale or distribution of flavored tobacco products in Hawai'i, including products with menthol, and prohibit the mislabeling of products as nicotine free. Flavors in tobacco products is especially harmful in youth, who are enticed by the various flavors. Attracting youth to flavored nicotine products leads to nicotine addiction that keeps them hooked for life. In 2020, 8 in 10 youth who currently use e-cigarettes reported using a flavored product, up from 7 in 10 in 2019 (National Youth Tobacco Survey). Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products will reduce the appeal of these products and protect our keiki from a lifetime of addiction. Menthol is just as, if not more, harmful than any other flavor in tobacco. Notorious for its ability to mask the harshness of tobacco, menthol makes it easier to start and harder to quit. With the goal of protecting our keiki and reducing the burden of tobacco in our communities, we must include menthol.

Ending the sale of all flavored tobacco will also advance health equity as disparities in tobacco use are due to the tobacco industry's history of marketing menthol cigarettes to youth and people of color. In Hawai'i, 78% of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander smokers use menthol cigarettes (Hawai'i BRFSS, 2008). Mint and menthol flavored e-cigarettes are one of the most popular flavors among youth.

We strongly support SB 3118 and respectfully ask that you pass this measure. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important public health issue affecting members of our community, especially our keiki.

Respectfully submitted,

J. Leocadia Conlon, PhD, MPH, PA-C
Legislative Committee Chair
Hawaii Public Health Association