



July 7, 2025

Mayor Erica Zweifel and Members of the Northfield City Council:

The Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota (ANSR) strongly supports the proposed ordinance to end the sale of all flavored commercial tobacco products, raise the minimum age for clerks selling tobacco 18 to 21, prohibit price discounting of commercial tobacco products, and prevent the delivery sale of commercial tobacco products in the city of Northfield.

ANSR is a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the human and economic costs of commercial tobacco, nicotine and other drugs in Minnesota. For 50 years we have helped enact strong public policies to reduce youth commercial tobacco use and advance health equity. Flavored tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, are especially popular among youth. These products are marketed with bright, colorful packaging and a wide variety of appealing flavors like cotton candy and blue raspberry. These products are very addictive. Studies show that flavored tobacco products increase the likelihood of young people starting to smoke and becoming addicted to nicotine. By removing these products from the shelves, Northfield can help reduce youth tobacco use and protect future generations.

A study found that one-third of adult smokers use tobacco coupons or discounts every time they have access to one. The tobacco industry uses marketing strategies like coupons and price promotions (e.g., buy one-get one) to lower the price of commercial tobacco products, keeping people who already use them coming back for more and making them more appealing to youth and young adults who are especially price sensitive. Price is one of the most effective tools for reducing smoking in adults and preventing youth from starting.

With these changes, Northfield is taking steps toward a healthier community. Restricting the sale of all flavored commercial tobacco products, prohibiting price discounting on commercial tobacco products, raising the minimum clerk age from 18 to 21, and preventing the delivery sale of commercial tobacco products, will make these products less accessible and appealing to young people. It will protect the communities the tobacco industry strategically targets—young, Black, Indigenous, LGBTQIA+ and other residents of color—from manipulative industry practices.

Sincerely,


Jeanne Weigum, President

Dear Northfield City Council,

My name is Audrey Hinman and this past year I was a senior at Northfield High School. I was a co-leader of the environmental club, and worked with Rave in order to help educate individuals on the proper disposal of electronic vaping devices. However, my only concern isn't just the environment. I'm also a strong supporter of the flavor bans. I would like to share a personal story as to why I firmly believe what I do. My freshman year of high school I transferred to a new school and met my best friend. After months of growing closer she confided in me that she was addicted to vaping. Contrary to popular belief, she was not proud of this addiction, and did not flaunt it for gain in "popularity". I asked her how the addiction started. She told me it was actually her older sister who started first, and even though her sister had told her to never try it, my friend smelt the fruity, sweet flavors, and gave it a try. Since then they had both been hooked. They'd tried to quit time and time again, but school made it hard. She would walk into the school bathrooms and smell the berry scents lingering. There was a constant reminder of what she couldn't quit. I watched as both of the sisters I loved so much struggled with the addiction for years. It wasn't until they went on a three week long mission trip to Cambodia they were finally able to give it up for good. The addiction still robbed so many moments from their teen years. To this day I still see her face turn while walking on the street where someone had been vaping a fruity flavor. Please take into consideration this ban because it will help so many people across our community.

Thank you,

Audrey Hinman

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

P.O. Box 64560
St. Paul, MN 55164-0560
(651) 662-8000 / (800) 382-2000



July 9, 2025

Dear Members of the Northfield City Council and Mayor Zweifel,

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota strongly supports the proposed updates to the commercial tobacco ordinance in Northfield. The measures being considered, including ending the sale of all flavored and menthol commercial tobacco products, raising the minimum clerk selling age from 18 to 21, banning coupons and promotions, and preventing the delivery sale of commercial tobacco products are crucial steps towards creating a healthier community.

As the largest health plan in Minnesota, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota is committed to improving the health of all Minnesotans, which is why we strongly support local policy change such as this ordinance. Eliminating these products will significantly reduce youth smoking and nicotine rates, address health inequities, improve health outcomes, and lower healthcare costs for all Minnesotans.

According to the 2023 Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey (MYTS), 93% of middle and high school students who use e-cigarettes use flavored products. The FDA has acknowledged that flavored commercial tobacco products are specifically marketed to children and are particularly harmful to youth, the LGBTQ+ community, and Black and Indigenous communities. By ending the sale of flavored commercial tobacco products, we can improve health outcomes for these targeted communities, particularly youth, Black Americans, and LGBTQ+ individuals. This ordinance is about creating thriving communities and going above and beyond minimum standards, not just about retailers following youth compliance checks.

The tobacco industry spends billions of dollars a day recruiting new customers. Meanwhile, Minnesotans spent an estimated \$4.7 billion on smoking-related healthcare expenses, a figure that does not even include costs related to smokeless tobacco, hookah, and e-cigarette use. By implementing these changes, Northfield can lead the way in reducing these staggering costs and improving public health.

We urge you to support these important updates to the commercial tobacco ordinance. Your leadership on this issue will make a lasting difference in the health and well-being of our community.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bukata Hayes".

Bukata Hayes
Vice President, Chief Community Health Officer
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

Isabelle Torgeson

Northfield, MN

July, 2025

Northfield City Council 801 Washington Street Northfield, MN 55057

Dear Northfield City Council Members,

My name is Isabelle Torgeson, and I am a senior at the Northfield Area Learning Center. I'm writing to express my strong support for the updated commercial tobacco ordinance.

Vaping has had a harmful impact on me and people close to me. I've seen friends become addicted to nicotine through flavored vapes that were made to seem harmless or fun. It's sad watching people my age struggle with something that started as "just trying it once." Some have even had health issues because of it. The amount of students who vape has become overwhelming, and it feels like it's everywhere—in bathrooms, hallways, even classrooms.

This ordinance is so important because it would help stop tobacco companies from targeting youth with flavors, discounts, and delivery options that make it way too easy for teens to access harmful products. Raising the minimum age to sell tobacco from 18 to 21 would also help reduce how easy it is for younger teens to get it from friends or coworkers.

Here are a few facts that stand out to me:

- Over 85% of youth who vape use flavored products.
- Menthol makes nicotine easier to start and harder to quit.
- Nearly 1 in 5 high school students in the U.S. currently use e-cigarettes.

Thank you for protecting youth like me by considering this ordinance. I truly hope you vote yes and continue putting our health and future first.

Sincerely,

Isabelle Torgeson Senior, Northfield Area Learning Center July, 2025

July 21, 2025

Northfield City Council
801 Washington Street
Northfield, MN 55057

Dear Members of the Northfield City Council,

As a practicing pediatrician serving families in Northfield and the surrounding area, I am writing to urge you to take decisive action to protect the health and future of our youth by enacting a ban on the sale of flavored tobacco products within the City of Northfield.

Flavored tobacco products — including menthol cigarettes, fruit- and candy-flavored e-cigarettes, cigars, and chewing tobacco — are specifically designed to attract young people. National surveys show that over 80% of youth who use tobacco started with a flavored product. In my practice, I have seen firsthand how these products lure teenagers into nicotine addiction, often under the mistaken impression that they are safer than traditional cigarettes. The reality is quite the opposite.

Nicotine is highly addictive and has profound effects on the developing adolescent brain. It impairs memory, attention, and learning capacity — impacts that can last a lifetime. Moreover, early nicotine use significantly increases the risk of future addiction to other substances. Flavored tobacco products serve as a gateway to long-term health consequences, including chronic respiratory illness, cardiovascular disease, and cancer.

In Rice County, we are not immune to these dangers. According to recent data from the Minnesota Student Survey, youth vaping rates remain troublingly high. Flavored products are a primary driver of this epidemic. While state and federal efforts have taken steps to limit access, local leadership is critical to creating effective and enforceable protections for our youth.

Banning flavored tobacco products is a proven public health strategy. Cities across Minnesota — including Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth — have already implemented such policies with positive results. Northfield has the opportunity to join this movement and demonstrate a strong commitment to the health and well-being of its young residents.

I respectfully urge you to support a comprehensive ordinance that bans the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol. This step will send a clear message that the health of our children comes before the profits of the tobacco industry.

Thank you for your leadership and dedication to our community's future.

Sincerely,
Heidi S. Kram, MD
Pediatrician, Allina Health
Northfield, MN

July 24, 2025

Dear Mayor Zweifel and Northfield City Council Members,

Flavored vapes are destroying families. Flavored vapes are destroying my family. I am a former senior at Northfield Highschool, and I am writing this letter to display my feelings on why we should end the sale of flavors and menthol. The scariest part of these products is that you don't analyze what is happening to your household, because it starts from the interior. It started with little things, him excusing himself for small increments of time, him acting weird every time we share a hotel room, and him having a faint blue raspberry or cherry scent. As a child, you do not notice the little things. The details escape you, because you just think "that's how my dad is, that is normal". However, as you get older, and your dad's addiction matures, things begin to become clear yet foggy at the same time. The child went from thinking her dad was a perfect role to being scared that the addiction would overtake him. The father went from someone with a family that struggled with addiction to being one of the family members that struggles with addiction. The child is me. The father is mine. I am scared for my father. He still hides this to everyone because he is embarrassed. He says he can stop. He can't stop. Nobody can stop. Please consider how scared some children are that they will become addicts due to their families history by banning experience enhancing flavors like "blue raspberry" or "cherry limeade". According to the 2024 National Youth Tobacco Survey, Nearly 90% of youth vape users use flavored products. It will be harder for youth to get addicted to a bitter tobacco taste, and that is just the plain hard facts. I thank the city council for protecting our youth and I encourage them to pass this ordinance. Please save my father. Save our future generation. Save me.

-Class of 2025 Northfield High School Student

Location
Government Services Building
320 3rd Street NW, Suite 3
Faribault, MN 55021

Website
www.ricecountymn.gov



Commissioner

District 2 – Galen Malecha

E-Mail
galen.malecha@ricecountymn.gov
Telephone
(507) 332-6100

July 15, 2025

Dear Northfield City Council Members,

I am writing to express support for the tobacco ordinance update being proposed in the City of Northfield, which includes the following proposed measures:

1. End the sale of flavored and menthol commercial tobacco products.
2. Prohibit the delivery sale of commercial tobacco products.
3. Prohibit the use of coupons and promotions.
4. Raise the minimum clerk age from 18 to 21.

In a significant move to address youth tobacco use, Rice County Commissioners unanimously approved a similar ordinance that took effect this month banning the sale of flavored tobacco products, including vapes and menthol cigarettes, in Rice County's unincorporated areas.

We are encouraging other municipalities to do the same.

Local policy updates complement work happening at the state and federal levels and are an essential part of creating an environment that promotes youth health and substance use prevention. Research published by the Journal of Preventive Medicine finds reductions in smoking by youth following local policy implementation, suggesting this approach is an effective tool for prioritizing youth health in our County.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of Northfield's proposed tobacco ordinance update, and for all you do to create a community where our youth can thrive.

Sincerely,

Galen Malecha

Galen Malecha

Rice County Commissioner, District 2

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

201 Orchard Street South

Northfield, MN 55057

PH 507.663.0629

www.northfieldschools.org

July 25, 2025

Dear Northfield City Council Members:

I am writing to support the proposed update to the City of Northfield's tobacco ordinance, which bans all flavored and menthol tobacco and nicotine products. This step is vital for protecting the health and future of our youth.

Research shows that flavored tobacco products greatly influence youth tobacco use. The [2023 Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey](#) found that over 80% of students who use commercial tobacco products prefer flavored choices, and nine out of ten youth using e-cigarettes favor flavored options. These products are intentionally made to appeal to young people with attractive flavors like "Gummy Worm" and bright, candy-like packaging. By limiting access to these products, the City can effectively cut down youth exposure to tobacco and nicotine.

Menthol and other flavors also make tobacco more addictive and harder to quit. Studies show that menthol cigarettes increase nicotine dependence, disproportionately impacting young people. Bans in states like Massachusetts and California have led to significant drops in flavored tobacco sales and youth access.

Our educators have observed the addictive nature of vape products and the negative impacts on our middle and high school students. These include negative impacts on academic performance and social and emotional well-being. The addictive nature of vape products also leads to disciplinary consequences.

This ordinance clearly demonstrates the City of Northfield's dedication to creating healthier communities. Together, we can shield young people from the harmful effects of these addictive products.

Thank you for considering this vital update to the tobacco ordinance.

Sincerely,



Matthew J. Hillmann, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



PUBLIC HEALTH/NURSING

320 Third Street NW • Faribault, MN 55021
(507) 332-6111 • Fax (507) 332-5932

July 17th, 2025

Dear Northfield City Council Members,

On behalf of Rice County Public Health, I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed ordinance restricting flavors and menthol, coupons and promotions, and the delivery sale of commercial tobacco products. Additionally, we would like to share our support for the provision to raise the minimum clerk age from 18 to 21 years of age. These factors all play a significant role in to early consumption of nicotine products by our youth, which in turn can lead to serious long term health impacts.

According to the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey, of students who reported using e-cigarettes in the past 30 days, students reported using the following flavors most: fruit (56%), candy or sweets (30%), and menthol or mint (29%). Additionally in 2022, 13.2% of Rice County 11th graders reported vaping in the past 30 days. With early use of tobacco products, youth are more likely to develop a severe nicotine addiction, and potential long-lasting changes to their developing brains which could have negative implications on memory, attention and learning. By restricting youth access to these products, we can help reduce future negative health outcomes.

On July 1st 2025, Rice County's new tobacco retailer ordinance went into effect. This ordinance was approved by the Rice County Board of Commissioners, and similarly to the drafted Northfield Tobacco Ordinance, highlights restrictions on flavors including mint and menthol, and restrictions on coupons and price promotions. It is imperative that we work together to combat early tobacco use. In doing so, we will protect our youth and show our commitment to promoting health for every individual.

Tobacco use is a major public health concern, and by implementing ordinances such as this, we can help to protect our community and youth from the harms of tobacco and nicotine addiction. I urge you to support the implementation of this ordinance. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Amani Alam, Rice County Public Health SHIP Coordinator
Amani.alam@ricecountymn.gov, 507.332.5911



Mayor Zweifel and City Councilors:

On behalf of the American Lung Association, I'm writing to express our strong support for the proposed updates to Northfield Code, Chapter 30 – Health and Sanitation; Article II. Tobacco, which includes restricting the sale of all commercial flavored tobacco and nicotine products.

The American Lung Association is the oldest voluntary health organization in the United States. For more than 120 years, the Lung Association has been working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through education, advocacy, and research. The Lung Association works on behalf of the 37 million Americans living with lung diseases.

For decades, the tobacco industry has used flavors to attract youth. Indeed, the industry's decades-long conspiracy to deceive the public includes many documents that demonstrate the industry's understanding of the role flavors play in kids starting to use tobacco products. Flavors are one of the main reasons kids use tobacco products and have played a big role in the youth vaping epidemic. Research shows that 81% of youth who have ever used commercial tobacco products started with a flavored product, and many cite flavors as a key reason for continued use.

Minnesota's 2023 Student Tobacco Survey: [Teens and Tobacco in Minnesota: Highlights from the 2023 Youth Tobacco Survey](#) highlights the alarming connection between adolescent nicotine use and mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, and stress. Additionally, four out of five students who vaped in the past 30 days reported one or more signs of dependence. For those that report trying to quit, over 40% reported multiple failed attempts – some as many as ten or more in the past year.

The current vaping epidemic demands evidence-based policy action. Flavored commercial tobacco and nicotine products deliver highly addictive substances during a critical period of brain development, increasing the risk of lifelong addiction. Restricting these products is a proven strategy to protect youth and promote public health.

We urge the Northfield City Council to adopt this policy and join the 34 other Minnesota communities that have taken this important step to safeguard the health of their residents – especially their youth.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to public health.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pat McKone", written in a cursive style.

Pat McKone, Senior Director

Public Policy and Advocacy

Pat.mckone@lung.org Cell: 218-393-4120

Good Morning Council Members,

While I am unable to attend in person, I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts in letter form. My name is Shelby and I am a recent graduate of Northfield High School. For the past year I have worked alongside other youth in the community to combat the increase of tobacco use in our schools. I am writing today to encourage you all to take a stand and work with us to protect the precious youth in our community.

I want to discuss the impact you all could have if you take a stand. Your voices hold the power to create change, you hold the power to protect children from falling victim to a predatory industry. Our youth are the roots of our community, and the priority should be to set them up for success. That means sheltering them from the devastating consequences of becoming a victim of big tobacco. I have watched too many friends, family members, neighbors, and people in my community fall to addiction, and it all starts with the temptation of flavors. This could all be stopped. Why deal with the consequences when we could simply prevent the situation? Change is hard to achieve and deviating from the norm is difficult, but it is possible, and it all starts when one person, one group, one community, stands up. Please set an example for youth and young adults watching. Be the community to stand up.

Thank you for your time,
Shelby Patterson



PUBLIC HEALTH/NURSING

320 Third Street NW • Faribault, MN 55021
(507) 332-6111 • Fax (507) 332-5932
www.co.rice.mn.us

July 17, 2025

Dear Northfield City Council Members,

I am writing to indicate my strong support for the proposed City of Northfield ordinance to ban flavored tobacco and nicotine products. This proposed change represents an important step forward in protecting the health and well-being of community members, particularly youth.

Research demonstrates that flavored tobacco and nicotine products play a significant role in attracting young people to these products. By restricting access to these products, youth exposure to tobacco and nicotine can be greatly reduced.

The Rice County Board of Commissioners approved a strong tobacco retailer ordinance in December 2024, which took effect July 2025. This included restriction of flavored products, including menthol. If Northfield adopts a similar ordinance, together we demonstrate a strong commitment to protecting the health of individuals and reducing access and appeal of these harmful products. It also helps set the stage for similar actions in neighboring counties and municipalities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. This is an important step toward a healthier future for the residents of Northfield.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Deb Purfeerst". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deb Purfeerst
Rice County Public Health Director

July 11, 2025



Dear Mayor Zweifel and Northfield City Council Members:

On behalf of Tobacco-Free Alliance, a Twin Cities-based nonprofit organization with the mission to prevent youth from using commercial tobacco, prioritizing communities adversely affected by industry marketing and health disparities. I am writing to express our strong support for the proposed policies that would: end the sale of all flavored and menthol commercial tobacco products; raise the minimum age for clerks selling tobacco from 18 to 21; prohibit coupons and promotional discounts; and ban delivery sales of commercial tobacco products.

These policies represent a powerful, evidence-based approach to protecting young people and improving community health. The youth tobacco epidemic, fueled by flavored products, demands bold local leadership like Northfield is considering.

Flavored tobacco products, especially flavored vapes, have been the driver of youth nicotine addiction. In Minnesota, 93.3% of high school and middle school students who use e-cigarettes report using flavored products. Most e-cigarettes also contain dangerously high levels of nicotine, which can interfere with brain development and lead to long-term dependence. Alarming, 4 out of 5 youth who vape show at least one symptom of nicotine addiction.

Menthol cigarettes are just as dangerous. Their cooling effect masks smoke's harshness, making it easier to start and harder to quit. Half of youth smokers start with menthol. The 2024 Surgeon General's Report and FDA both confirm menthol increases youth initiation and reduces quitting.

The commercial tobacco industry has long targeted young people with flavored products, deep discounts, and loopholes like delivery sales, knowing that if they don't hook customers by age 21, they are unlikely to ever become lifelong users. Ending these predatory tactics reduces the appeal of these products, especially to youth and other price-sensitive groups, and strengthens the city's ability to uphold and enforce the law.

By adopting this comprehensive policy package, Northfield can take a significant step forward in reducing tobacco-related harm and building a healthier future for its residents, especially its youth. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to public health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Elyse Less".

Elyse Levine Less
Executive Director

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