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House Federal and State Affairs Committee
Written Testimony: HB 2563
By Dr. Chad Johanning, KAFP President-Elect
February 13, 2020

On behalf of the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians (KAFP) and our nearly 2,000 members across the state of Kansas we offer comments to support of HB2563 with recommendations regarding the menthol flavoring exemption.

While this bill reflects great strides towards ending tobacco use in the State of Kansas and offers a robust T21 policy, the KAFP recognizes the best way to protect youth from getting started using e-cigarettes, cigarettes or other tobacco products is to ban all flavors for all products.

A menthol exemption will not adequately protect Kansas children and youth from initiating use of e-cigarettes because youth smokers are more likely to use menthol cigarettes than any other age group. Over half (54 percent) of youth smokers ages 12-17 use menthol cigarettes, compared to less than one-third of smokers ages 35 and older.¹

Menthol is a chemical compound that numbs the throat, reducing the harshness of smoking, thereby making menthol e-cigarettes more appealing to youth who are initiating tobacco use.² By masking the harshness with cooling menthol flavor, the tobacco industry makes it easier for beginners – primarily children – to try e-cigarettes, use and then become addicted to them. Data from the government's Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health (PATH) study confirms that youth menthol smokers are more likely to perceive menthol cigarettes as easier to smoke than regular cigarettes.³

This piece of legislation will help to reduce the number of adolescents and young adults who start smoking and will impact smoking-caused disease and death and will have a significant impact on patient care outcomes. Respectfully, the KAFP would ask the menthol exemption be removed to provide the most impactful legislation related to adolescent smoking addiction.

¹ U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC), Cigarette Report for 2018, 2019, <https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/reports/federal-tradecommission-cigarette-report-2018-smokeless-tobacco-report-2018/p114508cigaretterreport2018.pdf> [data for top 5 manufacturers only].;

² FDA. Preliminary Scientific Evaluation of the Possible Public Health Effects of Menthol versus Nonmenthol Cigarettes (2013)

³ Cohn, AM, et al., "Menthol Smoking Patterns and Smoking Perceptions Among Youth: Findings from the Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health Study," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 56(4): e107-e116, 2019.