



May 12, 2026

The Honorable Louis P. DiPalma
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
State of Rhode Island General Assembly
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for S2098

Chairman DiPalma and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support on S2098, which would add menthol as a flavored electronic nicotine-delivery system product.

My name is Margaret Holland McDuff and I am CEO of Family Service of Rhode Island (FSRI). FSRI is a behavioral health and social service organization with the mission “to advance hope and opportunity in our communities.” We have been serving Rhode Island children, families and communities for over a century, including programming to support healthy child development, to provide essential behavioral health services, and to coordinate crisis intervention programs that help children and families thrive.

As we know, flavored nicotine products are not harmless alternatives; they are designed to attract and retain users, especially young people. These flavors mask the harshness of nicotine, making it easier to start using these products and harder to stop. For many individuals, particularly adolescents, flavored products are the entry point into lifelong nicotine addiction.

This bill would add menthol to the definition of a “characterizing flavor,” which is important because although it can be perceived as less harmful because of its cooling sensation, menthol actually increases the addictive potential of nicotine products. It reduces the irritation caused by smoke or vapor, allowing users to inhale more deeply and more frequently. This can lead to higher nicotine exposure and stronger dependence. Additionally, menthol has been historically marketed in ways that increase use and addiction rates in vulnerable communities.¹

Restricting flavored nicotine products, including menthol, is critical to protecting public health, preventing addiction before it starts, and supporting those who are trying to quit. I urge you to support this bill.

Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to contact me with any questions or follow-up.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Margaret Holland McDuff'.

Margaret Holland McDuff
CEO

¹ American Lung Association - <https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/smoking-facts/health-effects/what-is-menthol>