



Council President Amy Brendmoen
Attn: Members of St. Paul City Council
15 West Kellogg Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55102

RE: Possible Amendments to Tobacco Licensing Ordinance

President Brendmoen and Council Members,

The Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association (MLBA), its members, and nonmembers in the off premise industry have recently heard that the St. Paul City Council is considering amending the current tobacco licensing ordinance. As this is not the first time we have been involved in tobacco licensing discussions, we do have some thoughts and concerns as to the intent and consequences of again, changing the rules.

On October 25, 2017, the MLBA drafted a letter to the St. Paul City Council regarding menthol tobacco products. On the heels of Minneapolis allowing tobacco shops and off premise businesses to sell menthol products, St. Paul proposed similar ordinance changes that allowed for this to continue. The question our retailers have is what has changed? Are we no longer trusted to sell a legalized product to 21 and older customers? Is there the ability to see whether changes that occurred before and after 2017 have made a difference? Where is the study or proof that further restrictions need to happen in St. Paul off premise alcohol retailing businesses specifically?

Off premise businesses are trusted to sell two controlled substances, alcohol and tobacco. We take tremendous pride in being allowed to sell both of these products safely and legally. St. Paul has passed ordinances restricting who can and who cannot be in our retail spaces and we have complied. We have also read in the Pioneer Press that there is a disproportionately high number of liquor stores in areas of communities of color. With the current smart and balanced ordinance that does not allow for an off premise business to be within 1/2 mile of another off premise business, how can this be possible as recent attempts to shorten that distance have occurred?

On behalf of the off premise industry in St. Paul, I am asking you to consider to continue to allow menthol tobacco products to be sold in our off premise retail spaces. We also ask for you to remove the minimum mark-up of \$10 on packs of cigarettes. We believe this may conflict with State of Minnesota minimum mark-ups and know this will raise the cost to consumers. Lastly, coupons are being redeemed by 21 and older customers. Taking that away from a consumer takes away their ability to save money and ensure the price of these products goes up. We feel as though this is an anti-consumer initiative.



Again, thank you for your time and we look forward to further productive discussions.

Respectfully submitted,
Tony Chesak
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