



November 20, 2023

Dear Mayor Carter and Members of the Saint Paul City Council:

I am writing on behalf of the Tobacco-Free Alliance to express our support for the proposed ordinance that would remove tobacco vending machine licenses, reduce the number of tobacco product shop licenses, and reduce the number of tobacco shop licenses. The Tobacco-Free Alliance is a Twin Cities nonprofit organization with the mission to prevent youth from using commercial tobacco, prioritizing communities adversely affected by industry marketing and health disparities.

The concentration of tobacco and e-cigarette retailers is detrimental to public health, particularly in communities with high percentages of low-income residents and communities of color. The unfortunate reality is that these retailers often cluster in neighborhoods where vulnerable populations reside, leading to an increased likelihood of youth initiation into tobacco use.

St. Paul has always been a leader in passing robust tobacco prevention policies. It is noteworthy that St. Paul has already taken steps by creating two classifications of licenses and implementing caps on the number of tobacco shop and tobacco product licenses. The proposed amendments, which further reduce these caps, are in line with the evidence-based approaches to tobacco prevention and align with the positive experiences of other municipalities in Minnesota. Research has shown that youth who live or attend schools in neighborhoods with the highest density of tobacco outlets or retail tobacco advertising have higher smoking rates than youth who live or attend schools in neighborhoods with fewer or no tobacco outlets. The implementation of the proposed ordinance will also help reduce the appeal of tobacco to youth and reduce the likelihood that youth will become users of tobacco-related products later in life.

Thank you for your leadership in considering this tobacco prevention ordinance that will help prevent another generation from a lifetime of addiction and tobacco-related disease.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elyse Levine Less".

Elyse Levine Less, JD, MPH  
Executive Director, Tobacco-Free Alliance