

September 20, 2017

Members of Saint Paul City Council
15 W. Kellogg Blvd, #310
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Council President Stark and Members of the Saint Paul City Council:


I am writing on behalf of the Saint Paul Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to state our support for the proposal to restrict menthol cigarettes to adult-only tobacco shops.

Menthol tobacco poses a tremendous risk to a population already at-risk: African American, Latino, and other young people of color. The tobacco industry has made a concentrated effort to market into low income and stable communities of color. The results are frightening and alarming. Since the early 1960s the pandering, grooming and marketing assault has been so relentless that now 88% of African American smokers use menthol. My generation and the next grew up saturated by customs, messages and lies promoted by an industry that's only goal was profit. Our community faced destruction disguised as beauty, wealth, and sex in the pages of Jet Magazine, Ebony, and Black Enterprise.

We see this restriction as a compromise, although it is a step in the right direction. The industry keeps calling it a ban but addicted adults will still have access to the menthol products they crave. We support the restriction because this is a product which contributes to the death of over 45,000 African Americans nationally each year. This ordinance will provide protection for our youth, the next generation. The power of the tobacco industry and the allure of their products are too dangerous to be ignored.

While much of NAACP history is chronicled in books, articles, pamphlets and magazines, the true movement lies in the faces---black, white, yellow, red, and brown---united to awaken the consciousness of a people and a nation. The NAACP will remain vigilant in its mission until the promise of America is made real for all Americans.

Sincerely,


Dianne Binns
NAACP, President
St. Paul Chapter