

August 26, 2019



The Honorable Melvin Carter and Members of the Saint Paul City Council  
15 W Kellogg Blvd. #310  
St. Paul, MN 55102

Dear Mayor Carter and Council Members:

I am writing on behalf of Tobacco-Free Alliance to express our support for the City of Saint Paul to increase the tobacco sales age to 21 with the removal of Purchase, Use and Possession penalties (PUP). The Tobacco-Free Alliance is a nonprofit organization working in Ramsey County to reduce the harms of tobacco by engaging all segments of the community, particularly youth, through assessment, education and advocacy.

Tobacco products are still hooking our youth. However, instead of finding a pack of cigarettes in a child's sock drawer, parents are finding e-cigarettes that resemble flash drives. The 2017 Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey found one in five high schoolers use e-cigarettes. That's nearly a 50% increase since 2014. Increasing the gap between youth and those legally able to purchase tobacco products will help get e-cigarettes and other tobacco products out of the hands of our children and prevent young people from ever starting. We also strongly urge Saint Paul to remove PUP penalties as there is no research that demonstrates that youth penalties reduce youth use of tobacco products and keeping these penalties may cause a ripple effect of harm for the penalized young person, their family and community.

The role that local communities play in the advancement of public health cannot be overstated. Local communities have historically been at the forefront of adopting innovative policies that protect the public from the deadly health effects of tobacco use. The success of such innovative policies has, in turn, spurred other localities, states, and even the federal government, to adopt these successful policies on a larger scale. Thank you for considering this important ordinance and doing everything you can to protect our community from the harms of tobacco.

Sincerely,

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

Elyse Levine Less  
Executive Director