

Saint Paul City Council Members  
15 W. Kellogg Blvs, Suite 310  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Sept. 20, 2017

Dear Saint Paul City Council Members,

**Justice delayed is justice denied.**

For decades, the tobacco industry has preyed on African Americans with menthol tobacco. Targeted advertisements, marketing and promotions blanket black neighborhoods. Rap artists and jazz musicians on the payroll of the makers of Newport and Kool make it seem like menthol tobacco is “our” tobacco. Their promotions have worked. Of African Americans who smoke, about 88 percent use menthol.

As Minnesota spoken word artist Joe Davis says, “Menthol helps the poison go down.” It makes it easier to start and harder to quit. Menthol tobacco use contributes to health disparities, and Minnesota has among the most challenging health disparities in the nation despite our world-class health care system. It is clear action must be taken to remedy this problem.

In 2016, the Saint Paul City Council voted to only allow flavored tobacco to be sold from adult-only tobacco shops. The council left out the most dangerous flavor of all: menthol. When many of us testified before the council, we said menthol was the bigger problem, and we were coming back to you to fix it. Now, we ask for that fix. It is not justice that predatory marketing and promotion continues to hook young African Americans and condemn them to a lifetime of struggle with addiction. It is not justice that the only tobacco flavor the City of Saint Paul ignores is the flavor that is killing Black men and women. It is not justice that something could be done and has not.

We know a small number of businesses will lose profits when menthol regulations are implemented. But the choice is a simple one: the lives and futures of Black and poor youth or the profits of a few. We choose life. We urge you to do the same.

Sincerely,



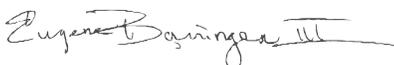
Toni Carter  
Ramsey County Commissioner



Damone J. Presley Sr.  
Youth Count Program Director  
Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood  
Development Corporation



Edward Owens  
Vice President, Criminal Justice  
Committee Co-Chair  
Saint Paul NAACP



Eugene Barringer III  
Community Stabilization Project



Eugene M. Nichols  
Health & Wellness Group Co-Chair  
African American Leadership  
Forum



Jeffrey W. Hassan  
Executive Director  
African American Leadership  
Forum



Rep. Rena Moran  
Minnesota State Legislature



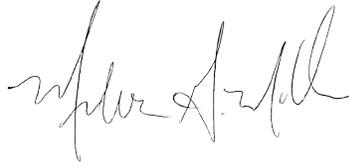
Nieeta Presley  
Executive Director  
Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood  
Development Corporation



Deacon Michael Ricks  
Progressive Baptist Church



Rev. Gloria Roach Thomas  
Camphor Memorial United  
Methodist Church



Rev. Melvin Miller  
Progressive Baptist Church



Rev. Runney D. Patterson  
New Hope Baptist Church



Melvin Giles



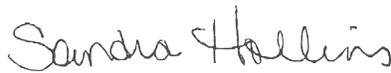
Noel Nix



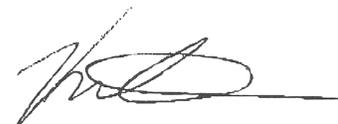
Readus Fletcher



Onetha Withers



Sandra Hollins



Victor Mister



Otis Zanders  
Executive Director  
Ujamaa Place



Anika Ward  
Director, Center for Prevention  
Blue Cross and Blue Shield



Mahmoud El-Kati