



May 5th, 2017

Dear Members of the Saint Paul City Council:

I am writing on behalf of the Hmong American Partnership (HAP). As leaders in our community, we strive to lead and organize younger generations to live long and healthy lives.

We are writing today to ask that you restrict the sale of menthol tobacco in our community. Saint Paul has already prohibited the sale of candy and fruit flavored tobacco products in stores where kids can enter. Now is the time to treat menthol tobacco products the same way that we treat other flavors.

For years, the tobacco industry has strategically targeted communities of color with menthol cigarettes. A survey conducted in Ramsey County found that menthol tobacco advertising was more common in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of Asian Americans, other communities of color, low income, and youth residents. ¹ According to the Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey in 2014, 44% of Minnesota high school smokers, use menthol tobacco. Menthol is uniquely attractive to youth, as the taste masks the harsh flavor of tobacco. As a result, menthol tobacco is easier to start. Studies also found that it is also harder to quit.

Saint Paul has been a longtime leader when it comes to protecting the health and safety of our youth. We hope the Saint Paul City Council considers taking action to protect our youth from these deadly products. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Bao Vang'.

Bao Vang
President & CEO

HAP - Embracing Our Diverse Community

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