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Sent: Monday, September 23, 2019 2:46 PM

To: #CI-StPaul_Ward1 <Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Xiong, Mai Chong (CI-StPaul) <mai.chong.xiong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Subject: Opposition to PUP Penalties in Tobacco 21 Bill

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

The Sierra Leone Aid Initiative strongly supports your efforts to increase the tobacco sale age to 21 in Saint Paul. We laud your continued efforts to improve community health and save lives through policy improvements and promoting normative changes in tobacco use especially among youth, the most vulnerable age population to targeted tobacco advertisement.

However, like many stakeholders in our communities, we are extremely concerned about the proposed provisions to for criminal penalties for Purchase, Use, or Possession (PUP) of tobacco products by persons under legal age of purchase.

We believe this PUP provision to be a poison pill to the intent of an otherwise laudable piece of legislation.

Youth across all socioeconomic and ethnic groups are heavily targeted by tobacco advertisement because years of research and literature show that over 70% of addicted adults started smoking as teens. Recent studies sponsored by the National Cancer Institute show that teens acquire nicotine addiction more quickly with fewer cigarettes than previously reported

It is axiomatic that Youth in communities of color are especially targeted for prosecution. Young people of color already suffer from persistent high rates of disparity in arrest, prosecution, and penalization. A bill that will increase arrests and prosecution of our youth disparately is unacceptable.

Young people bringing tobacco products from neighboring cities that have not implemented Tobacco 21 would be criminally liable for possession of products they purchased legally in another city.

The consequences of tobacco policy changes should not include adding layers of injustice to victims of tobacco advertisement such as our youth, especially youth from communities of color.

While we support raising the age to purchase tobacco products from 18 to 21, we more strongly urge you to remove penalties on youth for purchase, use, or possession of these products from proposed policy changes.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Rose, PhD
Executive Director, Sierra Leone Aid Initiative
16 Cutler Street, St. Paul, MN 55412