

November 10, 2015

Members of the 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 Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota to express our support for the proposed ordinance that would restrict the sale of flavored tobacco products to adult-only tobacco shops. At the Center for Prevention, we deliver on Blue Cross' long-term commitment to improve the health of all Minnesotans by tackling the leading causes of preventable disease—tobacco use, physical inactivity and unhealthy eating—to increase health equity, transform communities and create a healthier state. Decreasing youth tobacco use supports this mission by reducing the number of people who will be at risk of a lifelong addiction to nicotine and tobacco.

Flavored tobacco products are no safer than unflavored tobacco products, and tobacco use is the leading cause of death and disease in Saint Paul. Despite these facts, research shows that youth believe flavored tobacco products are less dangerous and less addictive than non-flavored tobacco, even though they carry the same health risks of cancer, heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. In order to support the health of all Minnesotans, it is important to decrease youth tobacco exposure and use.

Saint Paul has been a longtime leader in protecting the health and safety of our youth, and we need to continue to do everything we can to protect their health. By taking these products out of stores young people visit daily, Saint Paul will help prevent another generation from becoming lifelong tobacco users. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Janelle Waldock

Director

Center for Prevention

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota