



October 16, 2018

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

Re: Ord 18-50 Amending Section 409.08 to prohibit licensees of exclusive liquor stores which sell tobacco, tobacco-related devices, electronic delivery devices or nicotine or lobelia delivering products from allowing persons under eighteen years of age from entering the store.

Dear Mayor Carter and Council Members:

I am the Chief Executive Officer of ClearWay Minnesota, an independent nonprofit organization that works to reduce tobacco's harm in our state. I am writing to urge you to support amending Saint Paul City code to restrict unaccompanied youth under the age of 21 from entering liquor stores, except as allowed under state law.

St. Paul has taken significant steps to stem tobacco addiction, through restricting the sale of flavored tobacco products and restricting the sale of menthol tobacco to adult-only shops, which will soon be implemented. The menthol ordinance was designed to keep menthol tobacco products out of places where youth frequent, by allowing their sale only in adult-only retailers. This amendment will help retain the spirit of that effort by treating liquor stores the same as other stores that sell menthol tobacco products.

As you know, the tobacco industry has a long history of targeting youth, African Americans, women, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) communities with menthol tobacco marketing. It's also well known that menthol flavoring makes it easier for kids to start smoking and harder to quit. More than 34 percent of Minnesota high-school student smokers smoke menthol cigarettes, compared to 25 percent of Minnesota adult smokers. In the LGBTQ community, 71 percent of young adult smokers use menthol products.

Immediate action is needed to prevent nicotine addiction, especially among youth. In a new health [advisory](#), the Minnesota Department of Health called youth nicotine addiction a "major health concern" and the FDA [recently said youth e-cigarette use is an "epidemic."](#) Communities can – and must – do more to keep young people from getting hooked on commercial tobacco products in all forms.

Allowing youth to enter liquor stores threatens to weaken this strong public health policy. By updating this code, St. Paul can ensure that menthol restrictions have their intended positive health effects. There are good public health reasons to keep unaccompanied youth from entering liquor stores, and there should not be any effect on the businesses since youth are not allowed to purchase products sold in liquor stores.

We have been fortunate over the past few years to participate in the [Menthol Coalition](#), which is led by communities most harmed by menthol-flavored cigarettes. Together, we have called out the tobacco industry's tactics to hook youth and young adults on menthol-flavored cigarettes.

Thanks to your continued leadership on tobacco prevention, St. Paul has become a leading city in addressing tobacco-related disparities and protecting youth from nicotine addiction. We look forward to continuing to work with St. Paul to reduce tobacco's harm.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David J. Willoughby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

David J. Willoughby, M.A.
Chief Executive Officer
ClearWay MinnesotaSM