

**Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota**

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October 15, 2018

Council Member Mitra Jalali Nelson  
City of Saint Paul  
310 City Hall  
15 Kellogg Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55102

Dear Honorable Council Member Jalali Nelson:

I am writing to urge you to support the proposed amendment to the Saint Paul city code that restricts unaccompanied youth under the age of 21 from entering liquor stores except as allowed under state law.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota was one of 57 organizations that supported the passage of the menthol tobacco restriction ordinance. The aim of the ordinance was to restrict the sale of menthol tobacco products to adult-only retail establishments. Since liquor stores are **not** adult-only retail spaces, the proposed amendment would treat liquor stores the same as other retailers allowed to sell menthol tobacco products.

Restricting youth access to liquor is a smart policy for the health of the community, offering similar benefits that restricting youth access to menthol and flavored tobacco products offers. We know that if we can keep youth from using tobacco and alcohol by the age of 21, they are less likely to become addicted.

We do not believe that this amendment will have a negative impact on liquor store sales, since youth under 21 are not their customers. I would also like to remind you that, according to a 2017 Blue Cross report, in addition to the yearly **\$3.2 billion** it costs Minnesotans to treat diseases caused by smoking, it costs Minnesota businesses **\$4.3 billion in lost productivity** in lost earnings due to premature death.

I hope you will take this positive step toward making a healthier Saint Paul.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anika Carter Ward".

Anika Carter Ward  
Director, Center for Prevention  
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota