

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

P.O. Box 64560
St. Paul, MN 55164-0560
(651) 662-8000 / (800) 382-2000



October 25, 2017

Members of City Council
City of Saint Paul
310 City Hall
15 Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55102

Dear Honorable Members of City Council:

I am writing to urge you to support the proposed ordinance to restrict menthol-flavored tobacco products to adult-only tobacco stores.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota is committed to improving the health of all Minnesotans, which is why we strongly support local policy change to dramatically reduce access to menthol-, as well as candy- and fruit-flavored tobacco products.

I know you have heard about the potential economic losses that the retailers claim to face because of this ordinance. However, I would like to remind you that, 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** because of the loss of earnings due to premature death. The staggering costs of tobacco in both health care costs and loss of life cannot be compared to the loss of profits for those who want to continue to sell these lethal products.

By passing this ordinance, you will help keep every Saint Paul resident from a lifetime of addiction, illness and, in some cases, 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