



September 12, 2017

Members of the Saint Paul City Council
15 West Kellogg Blvd. #310
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Council President Stark and Members of the Saint Paul City Council

Thank you for your leadership in introducing an ordinance that will protect youth from tobacco addiction. Restricting menthol tobacco products to adult-only tobacco products shops is prudent action for you to be taking to protect youth. The Minnesota Cancer Alliance fully supports the ordinance you are considering and we urge you to take final action to adopt it.

The Minnesota Cancer Alliance (MCA) is committed to reducing the burden of cancer for all people living in Minnesota. We are a coalition of over 100 organizations from across the state dedicated to reducing the burden of cancer across the continuum; from prevention and detection, to treatment, survivorship, and end-of-life care.

Our members include Fairview Health Services, West Side Clinic, the Masonic Cancer Center at the U of M, Lao Assistance Center, the Mayo Clinic Cancer Center, the Art of Well, Health Partners, Medica, Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN, the MN Breast Cancer Coalition, the MN Hospital Association, the MN Medical Association, American Indian Cancer Foundation, Park Nicollet Cancer Center, the MN Ovarian Cancer Alliance, and the MN Society for Clinical Oncology – to name just a few.

Tobacco use causes at least 12 types of cancers and is the leading preventable cause of cancer and cancer deaths. Based on data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, cigarette smoking causes three in ten of all cancer deaths. Menthol tobacco poses a unique risk in that research shows people who smoke menthol have a much harder time quitting. Given that 88 percent of adult African American smokers smoke menthols, compared to the 26 percent of adult white smokers, it is clear why African Americans have the highest death rate and shortest survival from most cancers.

A key objective of the Minnesota Cancer Alliance's strategic framework, Minnesota Cancer Plan 2025 is to restrict the sale of flavored tobacco to adult-only tobacco shops as a strategy for achieving health equity in Minnesota communities. By considering this ordinance, you are taking a step in that direction. Curbing menthol use and prioritizing the lives of young people and communities of color over tobacco industry profits is the most impactful way to reduce the health disparities that exist in Saint Paul and across the state.

Thank you for leading the state to protect youth from the harms of tobacco and address the targeted marketing efforts by the tobacco industry.

Sincerely,

Ken Bence
Minnesota Cancer Alliance

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