

December 4th, 2023

Dear Mayor Carter and Members of the St. Paul City Council,

My name is Dr. Zeke McKinney, and I am writing on behalf of Advocates for Better Health, an organization dedicated to creating a healthy, equitable and thriving state by engaging physicians and medical students in community-driven public health initiatives.

We strongly support the City Council's proposed ordinance to reduce the number of commercial tobacco licenses in Saint Paul. When more tobacco and e-cigarette retailers are located in a given area, residents' health is negatively impacted. A high density of tobacco retailers means youth are more likely to start using tobacco and that people who smoke will consume more cigarettes per day and have a harder time quitting. Further, tobacco and e-cigarette retailers cluster in neighborhoods with a high percentage of low-income residents and Black and Latino residents. These communities are targeted by tobacco companies, and thus are disproportionately impacted by the health harms caused by commercial tobacco use.

By reducing the total number of licenses, you will ensure that St. Paul's commercial tobacco retailer density cannot become more concentrated. A lower concentration of retail shops correlates to lower overall use rates among residents. Our organization commends your efforts to reduce the commercial tobacco licenses in St. Paul. With these changes, St. Paul is taking steps toward a healthier community.

On behalf of Advocates for Better Health, thank you for taking action to protect public health in St. Paul. I hope the City Council will pass this bold public health policy.

Sincerely,

Zeke McKinney MD, MHI, MPH



President
Advocates for Better Health