

Dear Council Member

Thank you for considering raising the tobacco age to 21 in Saint Paul. As many of you know, Aurora-St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation has worked on Tobacco prevention in St. Paul for the past 10 plus years. We work closely with young people in the Rondo-Frogtown community to advocate for healthier communities and led Campaigns such as restricting flavored and menthol tobacco, setting minimum price for cigars, removing initiation tobacco etc.

We appreciate Council member Thoa's amendment to remove penalties for purchase, use and possession (PUP) of tobacco products. As someone who mentors young people in our community, I want to do all I can to keep my kids safe, healthy and avoid any interaction with law enforcement. There is concrete evidence to prove that penalizing kids does not help to prevent them from using tobacco. I want the resources from our City directed towards responsible retailers and preventing underage youth from accessing harmful products, not criminalizing youth in a way that will not yield good results in our City.

This past April, I presented to St. Paul School Board about this policy and they were pleased to see that we would be asking that PUP penalties were removed. Raising our youth is a team effort between our families and communities and these penalties are not proven to make a positive difference.

I hope will approve the amendment that Council member Thao brought forward at the meeting on 8/21. This issue is very important to our community and our youth.

Thank you,

Youth Director,

Vision In Living Life "Change Is Possible"

Damone J Presley