

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

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September 4, 2019

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

Dear Honorable Members of City Council:

We have learned that your proposed ordinance to raise the minimum sale age of tobacco products from 18 to 21 includes purchase, use and possession (PUP) penalties and we strongly urge you to remove this language from your draft policy.

PUP penalty language only serves to divert focus from addressing irresponsible retailers and the tobacco industry and, instead, punishes our kids. Tobacco 21, which has been successfully passed in over 40 Minnesota cities and counties, is meant to prevent youth tobacco use and addiction and save lives.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota is the co-chair of Minnesotans of a Smoke-free Generation, a coalition representing over 60 organizations, who all agree that these penalties are not effective. In 2017, Blue Cross released a study showing that each year, smoking claims over 6,000 Minnesota lives and costs our state **\$7.5 billion** in health care costs and lost productivity. 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.

Please join us in this movement to protect Saint Paul youth from the harms of tobacco.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janelle Wilton".

Vice President, Community Health and Health Equity
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota
Co-chair, Minnesotans for a Smoke-free Generation
smokefreegenmn.org