

Model Cities

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MODEL CITIES

November 4, 2015

Dear Mayor Coleman and Members of the City Council:

I am writing on behalf of Model Cities of Saint Paul, Inc, a 501 (c) (3) private nonprofit organization created in 1967 to address health disparities and increase health access among residents of St. Paul's Summit-University community. Over the years, we have evolved from a small neighborhood initiative, to a public health clinic, to a comprehensive human service provider and community developer. Our mission is "to promote social and economic prosperity by providing access to opportunities that develop and stabilize families and communities".

Our organization is in full support of the proposed ordinance that will shift the sale of flavored tobacco out of the neighborhood convenience stores that young people visit regularly and into adult-only tobacco shops. Flavored tobacco products have become increasingly popular among young people and are one of the primary ways the tobacco industry attracts young customers. Cheap and flavored tobacco products are available in every neighborhood store in our city. Their low prices, attractive packaging and sweet flavors can convince youth that these products are less harmful. This is simply not the case. Fruit and candy flavored products are used by the tobacco industry to get young people to try their products and keep users addicted for life. The tobacco industry is seeking "replacement smokers" for all of the ones who have quit or died, and they are counting on our youth to fill that role.

Tobacco has long been the number one cause of preventable death in our city. However, according to the 2014 Surgeon General's Report, restricting sales of tobacco products at the local level is an effective strategy in reaching an overall goal of a society free of tobacco-related death and disease. A policy like the one Saint Paul is considering will help ensure that the next generation can finally say that they are free from the addiction and harms of tobacco.

We commend the members of the Saint Paul City Council for taking a stand against the tobacco industry in order to protect the health of our young people. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Beverley".

Beverley Oliver Hawkins, Ph.D.

Chief Executive Officer

Model Cities of St. Paul, Inc.