



September 6, 2019

Saint Paul City Council  
15 Kellogg Blvd. West  
310 City Hall  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Mayor Carter and Members of the Saint Paul City Council:

I am pleased to provide this letter of support on behalf of the Minnesota Medical Association (MMA) for efforts by the City of Saint Paul to raise the minimum legal sale age for tobacco products to 21. The MMA is deeply appreciative of your leadership and efforts to protect the health of the youth in your community.

The MMA represents more than 10,000 physicians, medical residents, and medical students throughout Minnesota. In our efforts to help make Minnesotans the healthiest in the nation, preventing death and disease caused by tobacco and secondhand smoke has long been an MMA goal. The MMA proudly and actively supported passage of the Freedom to Breathe Act in 2007, and strongly supports restricting the sale of tobacco products to individuals under the age of 21.

As of August 12, 2019, eighteen states (Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia and Washington) and at least 480 localities in 24 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. territory of Guam, have raised the minimum legal sale age for tobacco products to 21<sup>1</sup>. Benton County, Beltrami County, Hennepin County, Isanti County, Olmsted County, Otter Tail County, Pope County, Stevens County, Wilkin County and the cities of Albert Lea, Arden Hills, Austin, Bemidji, Bloomington, Byron, Brooklyn Center, Duluth, Eden Prairie, Edina, Excelsior, Falcon Heights, Hermantown, Lauderdale, Lilydale, Little Canada, Mankato, Mendota Heights, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, New Brighton, North Mankato, North Oaks, Plymouth, Richfield, Robbinsdale, Roseville, Shoreview, St. Louis Park, St. Peter and Waseca are now counted in the growing list of localities that have taken action to protect our youth from the harms of tobacco, and it is our hope that the City of Saint Paul and the rest of Minnesota will follow suit.

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<sup>1</sup> Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, States and Localities that Have Raised the Minimum Legal Sale Age for Tobacco Products to 21, *available at*:  
[https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/content/what\\_we\\_do/state\\_local\\_issues/sales\\_21/states\\_localities\\_MLSA\\_21.pdf](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/content/what_we_do/state_local_issues/sales_21/states_localities_MLSA_21.pdf)

Cigarette smoking remains the leading preventable cause of death in the United States<sup>2</sup>, and while there are many strategies already in place to reduce the use of tobacco, a strategy is needed to ensure that adolescents and young adults do not start to smoke. Raising the minimum legal sale age for tobacco products will delay initiation rates of tobacco use by adolescents and lower prevalence in the overall population.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the downstream effects of smoking – tobacco-related disease – will also decrease in proportion to the reduction in tobacco use.

On behalf of the MMA, I urge you to acknowledge the long-term effects of tobacco use on the adolescent brain and adopt an ordinance to protect this community's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas L. Wood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Douglas L. Wood, MD  
MMA President

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<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Health Effects of Smoking, *available at:*  
[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/health\\_effects/effects\\_cig\\_smoking/](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/effects_cig_smoking/)

<sup>3</sup> National Academy of Medicine, Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products, March 2015, *available at:*  
<http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2015/TobaccoMinimumAgeReport.aspx>