

Dear Members of the City Council:


I am writing on behalf of Saint Paul-Ramsey County Community Health Services Advisory Committee (CHSAC) to voice our support for the proposed ordinance that will move flavored tobacco products from stores visited by youth and will update the cigar pricing ordinance to match that of neighboring cities.

Tobacco has numerous negative health effects. Nicotine is harmful to the developing adolescent brain and use beginning at a young age can lead to a lifelong addiction. Smokers also suffer disproportionately from cancer and respiratory and vascular disease. Each year in the U.S., more than 480,000 people die from tobacco-related diseases. Additionally, tobacco use reduces life expectancy by an average of 10 years.

Flavored tobacco is one of the primary ways the tobacco industry is appealing to youth. Flavored cigars and other tobacco products serve as a stepping stone to get youth addicted to tobacco and transition into more traditional tobacco products. This creates lifelong customers for the tobacco industry. Regulating these products will assure that our community, and particularly our young people, will never become lifelong tobacco users.

We are fortunate to be a part of a city that cares about the health of our citizens. Thank you for doing everything you can to protect our children, and all people in our city from the harms of tobacco. Saint Paul will help prevent another generation from becoming lifelong tobacco users. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Kottke, MD, MSPH
Chair, St. Paul-Ramsey County Community Health Services Advisory Committee