

November 11, 2015

Dear Russ Stark,

I am writing as a voter and taxpaying constituent to express extreme opposition to Ordinance 15-57, which would prohibit the sale of vapor products (otherwise known as e-cigarettes) and smokeless tobacco in flavors other than tobacco, menthol, mint and wintergreen in retail locations that are not specialty tobacco or vapor shops. In most cases, a smoker's first exposure to smoke-free alternatives like e-cigarettes and snus is in a non-specialty convenience store or gas station that also sells cigarettes. Although wild speculation by anti-smoking activists would have you believe that the range of flavors serves the sole purpose of enticing children, the reality is that flavors play a crucial role in helping adults transition away from smoking.

Vapor products come in a wide variety of flavors because adult consumers not only find them enjoyable, but also extremely helpful in quitting or greatly reducing their smoking. Two large-scale surveys of adult consumers of vapor products support this claim <http://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/10/12/7272> and <http://vaping.com/data/big-survey-2014-initial-findings-eliqid>. Both surveys found that flavor variety is extremely important in helping smokers distance themselves from the taste of a burning cigarette. Indeed, the first survey above included 4,500 adults, of whom 90% were ex-smokers. Between 60 and 70% of the respondents reported regularly using fruit and sweet flavors. Among the respondents who had quit smoking, flavor variability was rated as a 4 out of 5 ("very important") when asked about the impact of flavors on their ability to stay smoke-free.

Reducing awareness of and access to flavor options creates a barrier to Saint Paul's adult smokers becoming smoke free. As a result, Saint Paul smokers will actually be discouraged from quitting by switching to a product that is estimated to be 99% less hazardous than smoking.

Council members should consider the fact that although some youth are experimenting with e-cigarettes, youth smoking rates continue to decline at record pace. Given that Minnesota state law already prohibits sales to anyone under 18 years old, strict enforcement of the law should be the focus rather than making vapor products less attractive, accessible, and effective for adults.

I along with my fellow members of Consumer Advocates for Smoke-free Alternatives Association (CASAA) thank you for considering my comments on this issue and implore you to reject Ordinance 15-57 as well as any future legislation that would impede adult access to reduced harm nicotine products. Please keep me informed as to the progress of this ordinance through the legislative process. I look forward to your response on this issue and I am available for any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

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