

November 10, 2015

Members of the Saint Paul City Council
15 W Kellogg Blvd #310
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Council President Stark and Members of the Saint Paul City Council:

I am writing on behalf of *the African American Leadership Forum-Health and Wellness Group (AALF-HWG)* to express our support for the proposed ordinance that would restrict the sale of flavored tobacco products to adult-only tobacco shops. One of our 2015-2016 priorities for the AALF-HWG is Preventative Health. We continue strive to intentionally impact health disparities within the black community via specific issues that are deemed by the community to make a lasting change in our overall health statistics. When you consider the top 10 causes of death among African Americans living in Minnesota, cancer, stroke and C.O.P.D. can be attributed to smoking. We stand committed to inform and educate our youth of the long term affects of using flavored tobacco products. However, we cannot do this alone. We need your leadership and support on this issue.

Research shows that our youth believe flavored tobacco products are less dangerous and less addictive than non-flavored tobacco. However, they are just as dangerous as cigarettes with the same health risks of cancer, heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Some chemicals used to flavor tobacco and e-cigarettes, such as diacetyl, are known to cause irreversible damage to the lungs. Flavored tobacco products are readily accessible to young people. About four fifths (79%) of Saint Paul's 262 tobacco retailers sell flavored tobacco products. If we work together, we imagine a healthier community and a reduction in the health disparities that afflict our community as a result.

Saint Paul has been a longtime leader when it comes to protecting the health and safety of our youth. We need to continue to do everything we can to protect the health of our young people. By taking these products out of stores youth visit daily, Saint Paul will help prevent another generation from becoming lifelong tobacco users.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Eugene (Gene) M. Nichols
AALF-HWG Chair
AALF Secretary
Eugene.nichols@comcast.net
651.343.2048
5910 David Ct. Shoreview, MN 55126

>>The change I want to see, must first begin with me. I surrender so Your world can be changed.>>