



September 8, 2017

The Honorable Chris Coleman and Members of the St. Paul City Council
15 Kellogg Boulevard West, 310 City Hall
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Mayor Coleman and Council Members:

I am the Chief Executive Officer of ClearWay Minnesota, an independent nonprofit that works to reduce tobacco's harm in our state. I am writing to urge you to support restricting menthol flavored tobacco products to adults-only tobacco stores.

The tobacco industry has a long history of targeting youth, African Americans, women, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) communities with menthol tobacco marketing. Worse, menthol flavoring makes it easier for kids to start smoking and harder to quit. Almost 45 percent of Minnesota high-school student smokers smoke menthol cigarettes, compared to 25 percent of Minnesota adult smokers. In the LGBTQ community, 71 percent of young adult smokers use menthol products.

The City of St. Paul has an opportunity to protect kids and reduce these health disparities by restricting the sale of menthol products to adults-only tobacco stores. This will make it more difficult for youth to access menthol cigarettes and build on the bold steps the City Council previously took to restrict the sale of other flavored tobacco products.

Over the past few years, we have been fortunate to participate in the [Menthol Coalition](#), which is led by communities most harmed by menthol-flavored cigarettes. We have joined these communities in calling out the tobacco industry's tactics to hook youth and young adults on menthol-flavored cigarettes. We also know that stopping youth smoking doesn't just prevent future disease and death – it also reduces excess medical costs, which are an enormous burden on individuals, families and taxpayers. I hope the City of St. Paul will continue its history of leadership to fight smoking by implementing this policy. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David J. Willoughby".

David J. Willoughby, M.A.
Chief Executive Officer
ClearWay MinnesotaSM

PS – [Here is a video](#) that does a nice job summarizing the history and harms of menthol-flavored tobacco products.