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CITY CLERK



Mayor Chris Coleman and the Saint Paul City Council
15 W Kellogg Blvd., 310 City Hall
Saint Paul, MN 55102

September 8, 2017

Dear Mayor Coleman, Council President Stark, and members of the Saint Paul City Council:

I am writing on behalf of Tobacco-Free Alliance to ask that you support an ordinance to regulate menthol tobacco products in Saint Paul. Tobacco-Free Alliance is a nonprofit organization committed to reducing tobacco harms by engaging all segments of the community through assessment, education and advocacy. We are committed to reducing health inequities and using the community's strengths to create sustainable change. We are also proud members of the Menthol Coalition with whom we share the common goal to reduce the harm caused by menthol tobacco products.

Tobacco companies single out youth, low income communities and communities of color, and encourage them to smoke. Much of targeted tobacco marketing is from years of the tobacco industry strategically targeting communities with menthol cigarettes. A survey conducted in Ramsey County found that menthol tobacco advertising was more common in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of communities of color, low income, and youth residents.¹ This targeted marketing creates health disparities for minorities who fall victim to preventable diseases from tobacco use at much higher rates than the general population.

We are glad that Saint Paul has already prohibited the sale of candy and fruit flavored tobacco products in stores where kids can enter. That was the first step. The Saint Paul City Council can help stop future health disparities by treating menthol tobacco the same way as other flavors, and sell these deadly products only in adult-only tobacco shops where they are unavailable to our community's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elyse Levine Less".

Elyse Levine Less, JD, MPH

Executive Director, Tobacco-Free Alliance

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¹ Widome et. al., 2013.