



VALUES, ENTERPRISE, COMMUNITY LIFE

September 14, 2017

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

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council:

I am writing on behalf of His Works United to express our support for the proposed ordinance that would restrict the sale of menthol tobacco products to adult-only tobacco shops. His Works United is a broad and powerful ecumenical collaboration of African American churches partnering beyond the walls of our worship centers to bring light and hope to the community.

The health impact and cost of tobacco use in our community is too often overshadowed by other, more immediate challenges like gang violence and drugs. Tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of death and disease in our community and our state. The use of menthol tobacco is high among African Americans and the harms have been overlooked. Churches across the City of Saint Paul have been involved in "No Menthol Sunday", a national observance day dedicated to educating our congregations about the harmful effects of menthol tobacco products.

The tobacco industry targets young people, and particularly young people of color with menthol-flavored tobacco products. As a result, menthol cigarette use among Minnesota High School smokers has more than doubled since 2000. Tobacco companies add menthol to tobacco products to cool the throat and make them taste better. Menthol cigarettes make it easier to start smoking and harder to stop.

We are thankful the Saint Paul City Council is leading the way by restricting where menthol tobacco products can be sold in Saint Paul. This policy will go a long way to prevent young people in our community from becoming addicted to these products. By taking these products out of Saint Paul stores youth regularly visit, the Saint Paul City Council is helping to prevent another generation from becoming lifelong tobacco users. Thank you for supporting the health of our community.

Sincerely,

*Alfred Babington-Johnson, President & CEO
Stairstep Foundation/His Works United*

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