



Sept. 19, 2017

Saint Paul City Council
15 W. Kellogg Blvd. #310
Saint Paul MN 55102

Dear Members of the City Council:

The Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota (ANSR) strongly supports your efforts to restrict the sale of menthol tobacco products to adult-only tobacco retailers. Since 1973, ANSR has worked to prevent youth tobacco use by helping enact strong public policies like the one you are considering.

Menthol is a flavor, and a very special flavor at that. It makes it easier to start smoking, increasing the likelihood a youth will start smoking and become addicted. This is not news to the tobacco industry, which targets young people with menthol tobacco products. As a result, almost half (44 percent) of Minnesota high school students who smoke use menthol. Additionally, the tobacco industry has aggressively marketed menthol tobacco to the African American community and the LGBTQ community for decades. This has led to higher rates of using menthol tobacco products by these groups and is an important cause of health disparities.

The tobacco industry and its retail arm would like to make this a discussion about money. The last thing they want to focus on is the death and disease that sales of their products cause. Our concern is the health of many, not the profits of a few.

Minneapolis just passed a similar ordinance to the one proposed in Saint Paul. By adopting this ordinance, Saint Paul, which has always been a leader in enacting sound public health policies, will once again be at the forefront of helping to prevent another generation from becoming lifelong tobacco users.

Again, we strongly support your efforts and will provide any technical assistance you might require as this important ordinance moves forward.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Weigum
President, Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota