

Mayor Coleman and Members of the Saint Paul City Council
15 Kellogg Blvd. West, 310 City Hall
Saint Paul, MN 55102

September 18, 2017

Dear Mayor Coleman and Members of the Saint Paul City Council:

The Menthol Coalition is a group of health and community organizations in Minnesota committed to reducing the harm caused by menthol-flavored cigarettes and other tobacco products. As co-chair of the coalition, I look forward to your leadership in the move to restrict the sale of menthol tobacco products in Saint Paul.

We formed the Menthol Coalition in 2015 to take local action to protect our communities from the harm caused by menthol tobacco. While the federal government banned the production and sale of flavored cigarettes in 2009, it opted to exclude menthol due to heavy lobbying by the tobacco industry. We knew we couldn't wait for the federal government to take action on menthol, so we pulled together a large, diverse group of health and community organizations dedicated to reducing menthol's harms right here in Minnesota. Attached is the Menthol Coalition membership list of 50+ organizations. Also attached is a letter of formal support we secured from more than 60 Saint Paul leaders who want to see menthol tobacco restricted to adult-only shops in Saint Paul.

The tobacco industry targeted the African American community, the LGBTQ community and other communities of color for decades with menthol tobacco. The result is that 88% of African American adults who smoke use menthol, and 70% of LGBTQ youth smokers smoke menthol. The tobacco industry is making an enormous profit while our most vulnerable communities suffer from the health consequences of tobacco addiction.

By passing this ordinance, you will position Saint Paul as a national leader in tobacco control efforts and choose to protect the lives of our young people over the bottom line of the tobacco industry. For that we are grateful.

Sincerely,



LaTrisha Vetaw
Menthol Coalition Co-Chair