



September 21, 2017

The Honorable Chris Coleman
Honorable Members of the Saint Paul City Council
15 Kellogg Blvd. W.
Saint Paul, MN 55102

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

The Minnesota Medical Association (MMA) is the professional association representing more than 10,000 physicians, residents and medical students. We are dedicated to advancing patient health in Minnesota and making our state the healthiest in the nation. We are writing to state our support for the proposed ordinance that will restrict where menthol tobacco products can be sold in Saint Paul.

As physicians, we see firsthand the devastating consequences of tobacco use. Tobacco use remains the leading cause of death and disease in our state, with more than 6,000 Minnesotans dying each year from tobacco-related disease. The consequences of menthol tobacco use are even more devastating. Addiction medicine researchers have determined that menthol increases nicotine absorption, leading to greater dependence. Among high school smokers, those who smoke menthols are more likely to smoke within one hour of waking and more likely to report cravings compared to high school smokers of non-menthols.

Menthol tobacco products are also heavily targeted to communities of color which has led to a disproportionate use of menthol cigarettes among African Americans, LGBTQ community members and Native Americans. These communities also suffer disproportionately from the negative health effects of tobacco use.

A 2011 report by the Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee concluded that removing menthol cigarettes from the marketplace would benefit public health. An ordinance that prohibits menthol tobacco sales in stores where youth can enter will discourage children from picking up these products in the first place, lessen future use, and provide better health outcomes for future generations. This initiative is a positive step to ensure Saint Paul is one of the healthiest places to live in our nation.

Sincerely,

David Agerter, MD
President
Minnesota Medical Association