

October 11, 2021

Saint Paul City Council  
15 Kellogg Blvd. West, 310 City Hall  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Mayor Carter and Members of the City Council:

Sierra Leone Aid Initiative (SLAI) and the communities that we serve strongly support your efforts to regulate price discounting of tobacco products in the city of Saint Paul. Passage of sound policies that help prevent our youth from using commercial tobacco products will save lives and improve public health in communities targeted by tobacco companies.

SLAI is part of a larger group of organizations serving people of Sierra Leonean descent in the Twin Cities area. Our mission is to provide educational support and leadership training for our youth. Over the past 16 years, our youth groups have been educated and trained in tobacco control and advocacy to help reduce smoking, vaping, and use of various tobacco products by teenagers and young adults.

The harmful effects such as lung cancer, asthma, and shortened life spans caused by nicotine and various ingredients in tobacco products are well-documented. Tobacco use is still the leading cause of preventable deaths in Minnesota. Tobacco harm is markedly greater in Black, Indigenous, and other Communities of Color.

Data also shows that pricing strategies are very effective in reducing adult smoking and in preventing youth from starting to use tobacco products. Studies published by the National Institute of Health and others show that a minimum price of \$10 per pack of cigarettes, and regulating price discounts can significantly decrease tobacco use, especially among youth and young adults.

Our city is moving in the right direction to help create sustainably healthier communities. The prohibition of the redemption of coupons for all tobacco and vaping products, and setting a minimum price to cigarettes and smokeless tobacco will reduce tobacco use, its harmful effects, and its costs to society.

I pray that the St. Paul City Council consider and pass this much-needed public health policy.

Sincerely,  
Jonathan Rose, PhD.  
*Exec. Director, Sierra Leone Aid Initiative*  
612 990-5264