

October 15, 2021

The Honorable Melvin Carter and Members of the Saint Paul City Council  
15 W Kellogg Blvd. #310  
St. Paul, MN 55102



Dear Mayor Carter and Council Members:

I am writing on behalf of Tobacco-Free Alliance. We are a Twin Cities nonprofit organization with the mission to prevent youth from using commercial tobacco, prioritizing communities adversely affected by industry marketing and health disparities.

We are glad to see that the St. Paul City Council seeks to update its tobacco licensing ordinance to regulate price discounting of commercial tobacco products in Saint Paul.

Tobacco companies use marketing strategies to keep tobacco product prices low for consumers, making them much more appealing to young people and undermining smokers' attempts to quit. Price promotions lead to a new generation of lifelong smokers and higher rates of leading causes of death among smokers - heart disease, cancer, and stroke.

The cost of tobacco products has a significant effect on youth use and tobacco companies know this by targeting them with low prices and enticing flavors. Minnesota young adult nonsmokers who receive tobacco coupons are twice as likely to become smokers. By removing price promotions and coupons, Saint Paul has the opportunity to make tobacco products less accessible and appealing to young people. This ordinance will protect youth, LGBTQ, and Black, Indigenous, and other residents of color from tobacco's harms as these groups have been historically targeted by the tobacco industry.

The role that local communities play in the advancement of public health cannot be overstated. Local communities have historically been at the forefront of adopting innovative policies that protect the public from the deadly health effects of tobacco use. The success of such innovative policies has, in turn, spurred other localities, states, and even the federal government, to adopt these successful policies on a larger scale. Thank you for considering this important ordinance and doing everything you can to protect our community from the harms of tobacco.

Sincerely,

Elyse Levine Less, JD, MPH  
Executive Director, Tobacco-Free Alliance MN