



October 26, 2021

Denver City Council  
1437 Bannock Street  
RM 451  
Denver, CO 80202

Council President Gilmore and Denver City Councilmembers,

I am a Saint Paul City Council Member. Because tobacco takes such a toll on the health and economy of our community our council has worked very hard over the last decade to pass and enforce ordinances to reduce the harm tobacco causes. We were one of the first in the state to create smoke-free bars and restaurants and we have a very dedicated staff who enforce our age-of-sale and other tobacco ordinances.

Our council originally passed a flavored tobacco ordinance that did not include menthol. A year later we revisited our ordinance and included menthol. We allowed these flavored products to be sold in adult-only tobacco stores. At the time we incorrectly believed that this level of restriction was sufficient. We quickly learned better.

The retail side of the tobacco industry quickly moved to work around our ordinance. They began erecting 'stores within a store' facilities so they had menthol in a small boxed in area but still in the original store. The number of 'adult only' tobacco stores mushroomed, more than doubling in two years. We had one ward that had no tobacco stores when we passed the ordinance and now there are numerous tobacco stores.

The behavior of the industry completely undermined our intent which was to reduce the promotion and availability of these products that are so appealing to youth and which have been marketed to the African American community with such devastating effectiveness.

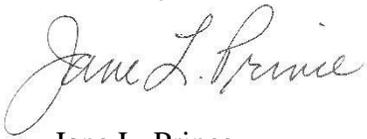
Once we allowed the adult-only exemption it was hard to eliminate it. Instead, we have repeatedly come back to the ordinance to try to reign in this industry. We have set a license cap and recently reduced that cap. We have created a new class of license to better regulate tobacco stores, we have increased our penalty structure. Our inspections teams continue to find violations even though we have done a thorough training program for our vendors.

Saint Paul's experience was repeated in Minneapolis where they also allowed flavored tobacco sales in adult-only stores.

Saint Paul is a minority/majority city. Having an industry that preys on our people is offensive, but it is also essential that we as council members represent the community and not be too far out in front of public opinion. We were not. These tobacco regulations came to us from the community, a coalition of youth, African American community leaders, the faith community and public health professionals who have demanded these regulations. This support has only grown since we began this work.

If we had this to do over again, I believe we would have completely banned the sale of flavored tobacco products in our city. It would have saved a vast amount of council and staff time. And I have no doubt that it would have saved lives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane L. Prince". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

Jane L. Prince  
Saint Paul City Councilmember, Ward 7  
651-308-4984