

June 5, 2008

Baltimore City Health Department
210 Guilford Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21209

Dear Ms. Brown-

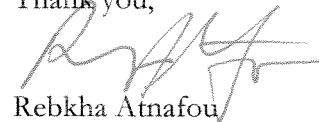
The sale of single, cheap cigars in Baltimore City is hurting our youth. Selling single cigars – as opposed to larger packs of cigarettes or cigars – makes them more affordable for young people. This increases the appeal of buying them, and sends a message to youth that these cigars are *for* them. Marketing these cigars to youth contradicts years of media and public health efforts to convince youth that smoking cigarettes is *not* cool, and *is* bad for their health.

The fact that these cigars are more dangerous to smoke than cigarettes makes this situation even more deplorable. Youth are misinformed about the health problems these cigars cause. They assume that cigars are not as bad as cigarettes, when in fact they are worse. Selling the cigars individually promotes such assumptions, because youth who purchase them see each purchase as an isolated event, and don't realize that they do, in fact, have an addiction – just like someone who buys packs of cigarettes. Selling the cigars in packages of at least five will increase the price enough to make youth reconsider whether or not they are worth the cost, and will deter youth from casually purchasing the cigars without thinking about what they are doing.

Banning these cigars will help our youth. They will be healthier now, and at less of a risk for serious health problems later in life. If youth are not healthy throughout their lives, they cannot succeed. Good health is a vital part of having a positive, productive life. For these and countless other reasons, The After-School Institute supports the Health Department's proposed ban on selling single, cheap cigars. As an organization committed to improving outcomes for Baltimore City's youth, we fully support this effort as a way of spreading awareness and knowledge about health and health risks for our youth.

If there is anything else The After-School Institute can do to demonstrate our support, please let us know. We are willing and ready to support the Health Department in this endeavor, and to help Baltimore City's youth be successful and healthy throughout their lives.

Thank you,



Rebeka Atnafou
Executive Director