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San Francisco to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products *Historic Measure Includes Menthol Cigarettes, Candy-Flavored E-Cigarettes*

San Francisco, CA – Leading health organizations and community groups applauded the San Francisco Board of Supervisors today for its public health leadership. The Board gave unanimous final approval to an ordinance that will end the sale of flavored tobacco products – including menthol-flavored cigarettes – throughout the city and county. Mayor Ed Lee has indicated he will sign the measure into law, which will go into effect April 1, 2018.

Flavored tobacco products – including menthol cigarettes and candy- and sweet-flavored e-cigarettes and cigars – are widely considered “starter” products that appeal to youth. According to a government study, 81 percent of kids who have ever tried tobacco started with a flavored product and 80 percent of current youth tobacco users had used a flavored tobacco product in the past month.

“We thank the Board of Supervisors for its strong leadership in fighting tobacco use, the leading preventable cause of death in this country,” said Alden McDonald III, MD, President of the Board for the Greater Bay Area Division of the American Heart Association. “With this decision, San Francisco has yet again raised the bar for public health policy around tobacco control and paved the way for communities considering similar measures in the Bay Area, California and across the country.”

“Tobacco use is responsible for one-third of cancer deaths in this country. Today’s action helps us crack down on a popular and devious tactic that tobacco companies employ to lure kids into a lifetime of tobacco addiction,” said ACS CAN California’s Grassroots Director Lori Bremner, whose father died from tobacco-related disease. “It’s long past time we stop tobacco companies from targeting kids and other vulnerable populations by using flavored products to make it easier for people to start and stay addicted to using tobacco products.”

Among the most serious challenges, tobacco companies have aggressively marketed menthol-flavored tobacco products to African Americans, often targeting youth. The tobacco industry has long targeted these communities with marketing for menthol cigarettes through sponsorship of community and music events, targeted magazine advertising, youthful imagery and disproportionate marketing in targeted neighborhoods. The destructive impact on the African-American community is clear as African Americans smoke menthol cigarettes at very high rates and quit smoking at lower rates, and African-American men have notably high death rates from lung cancer.

“Working with people battling lung disease every day, we know how painful, isolating, and hopeless many people feel when they are struggling with tobacco addiction and tobacco-related disease,” said Dr. Tanya Stevenson, President & CEO of Breathe California. “We also know how agonizing it is to watch people you love struggle with oxygen tanks, tests, treatments, and surgeries- all due to tobacco use. Passing this legislation protects the next generation of San Franciscans, and their families, from suffering the same way. And it serves as a model for the rest of the nation.”



The anesthetizing effect of menthol makes the smoke easier to inhale and masks the harsh taste of tobacco, making it more appealing to new users. A report by the Food and Drug Administration found that those who begin smoking menthol cigarettes are more likely to progress to a regular smoking habit and have a higher level of nicotine dependence than those who begin with non-menthol cigarettes.

“We have seen clear evidence that all of these flavored tobacco products entice kids into tobacco addiction and destroy the health of so many vulnerable communities,” said Carol McGruder, Co-Chair of the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council. “By finally putting an end to the sale of these products, our city is issuing a clarion call that we will win the fight against tobacco once and for all – for our kids, all our residents and our future.”

Meanwhile, young smokers are also more likely to use menthol cigarettes than other age groups. More than half (54 percent) of youth smokers ages 12-17 use menthol cigarettes compared with fewer than one-third of smokers 35 and older. Among African-American youth, menthol use is even higher: seven out of 10 African-American youth smokers smoke menthol cigarettes.

“Ending the sale of menthol and other flavored tobacco products and e-cigarettes will reduce teen use and ultimately save lives,” said Vanessa Marvin, Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy for the American Lung Association in California. “In California alone, there are 40,000 tobacco-caused deaths each year. San Francisco is taking a huge step toward stamping out the tobacco industry’s efforts to get kids addicted to tobacco.”

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States, claiming more than 480,000 lives every year. Although overall cigarette use is declining in the United States, millions of Americans still use tobacco products and the sale of flavored tobacco products and menthol cigarettes continues to increase steadily, especially among young people and new smokers.

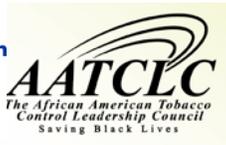
“Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products is an issue of both health and social justice,” said Bob Gordon, Co-Chair of the San Francisco Tobacco-Free Coalition. “Young menthol cigarette smokers are disproportionately African American, Asian American, LGBT and from low-income communities already significantly impacted by tobacco-related disease. We need to do everything we can to stop these disturbing tactics and trends.”

The *No More Flavored Tobacco* coalition comprises the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Breathe California, and Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund. The group has launched an educational [website](#) to inform the Bay Area about what’s at stake if flavored tobacco products aren’t reined in. Featured on the website is the [report](#) “*The Flavor Trap: How Tobacco Companies Are Luring Kids with Candy-Flavored E-Cigarettes and Cigars*” that details the dangers of flavored tobacco and how it is being marketed to hook the next generation to a potential lifetime nicotine addiction.

Learn more at www.NoMoreFlavoredTobacco.org.

About American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network is the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society. ACS CAN supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit <http://www.acscan.org/>.



About American Heart Association and American Stroke Association

The American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association are devoted to saving people from heart disease and stroke – the two leading causes of death in the world. We team with millions of volunteers to fund innovative research, fight for stronger public health policies, and provide lifesaving tools and information to prevent and treat these diseases. The American Heart Association is the nation’s oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. The American Stroke Association is a division of the American Heart Association. To learn more or to get involved, call 1-800-AHA-USA1, visit heart.org or call any of our offices around the country. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About the American Lung Association in California

The American Lung Association in California is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through research, education and advocacy. The Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer, to improve the air we breathe, to reduce the burden of lung disease on individuals and their families, and to eliminate tobacco use and tobacco-related diseases. For more information about the American Lung Association in California or to support the work it does, call 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-685-4872) or visit www.lung.org/california

About the Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund

The mission of the Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund is to improve health and save lives by reducing tobacco use, the number one cause of preventable death in the United States and around the world. We mount education, advocacy and electoral campaigns in support of public policies that prevent kids from smoking, help smokers quit and protect everyone from secondhand smoke.

About Breathe California

Through grassroots education, advocacy and services, Breathe California fights lung disease, advocates for clean air and advances public health in our local communities. Since 1908, we have addressed the most serious health threats of our time through grassroots programs that empower individual, institutional and community change for better breathing and healthier living. We have local offices in San Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles, Monterey and Sacramento. Visit us: www.breathecalifornia.org

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