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Oakland Gives Final Approval to Restrict Sale of Menthol Cigarettes and Other Flavored Tobacco

Oakland, CA – Sep. 19, 2017— Leading health organizations and community groups today applauded the Oakland City Council’s unanimous final approval of a measure to keep flavored tobacco products – including menthol-flavored cigarettes – away from youth. The new law will go into effect mid-2018.

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 in California, Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights, Breathe California, and Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund. They issued the following statement:

“We must do everything we can to protect young people from tobacco addiction. Flavored tobacco products – including menthol cigarettes and candy-flavored e-cigarettes – are a key part of the industry’s strategy to lure youth, particularly youth of color, into becoming tomorrow’s addicted users. That means ending the sale of flavored tobacco products – which will reduce teen use and ultimately save lives – is an issue of both health and social justice.

We applaud the Oakland City Council for voting to end the sale of flavored tobacco products in the city. Young menthol cigarette smokers are disproportionately African American, Asian American, LGBT and from low-income communities already significantly impacted by tobacco-related disease. For far too long the tobacco industry has successfully blocked these communities from meaningful engagement in public health policy that addresses the needs of all members of the community.

The tobacco industry cannot survive without luring a new generation into a lifetime of tobacco addiction. The industry shamelessly seeks to maximize profits while its customers suffer death and disease, and local taxpayers continue to foot the bill for tobacco-related illnesses. Today’s action in Oakland is an important step toward ending that trend.”

Additional background information on the campaign and issue:

- Oakland joins a growing number of cities and counties in California – including Berkeley, Los Gatos, Palo Alto, Sacramento, San Francisco, Santa Clara County and Yolo County – that have adopted or are considering similar policies.
- A government study has found that 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.



- 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.
- 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.
- Tobacco use is responsible for one-third of the cancer deaths in this country and causes nearly half a million deaths annually from all tobacco-related illnesses including heart and lung disease.
- The *No More Flavored Tobacco* coalition has launched an educational [website](#) (NoMoreFlavoredTobacco.org) 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.

About the Members of the *No More Flavored Tobacco* Coalition:

About the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council

Formed in 2008, the AATCLC partners with community stakeholders, elected officials, and public health agencies to inform the national direction of tobacco control policy, practices, and priorities, as they affect the lives of Black American and African immigrant populations. The AATCLC has been at the forefront of decreasing youth access to mentholated and other flavored tobacco products by elevating the regulation of these products on the local, state, and national tobacco. For more information, visit <https://www.savingblacklives.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. Visit us at: <http://www.tobaccofreeaction.org/>.

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.

About Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights

Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights is the leading national lobbying organization (501 (c) 4), dedicated since 1976 to nonsmokers' rights, taking on the tobacco industry at all levels of government, protecting nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke, and preventing tobacco addiction among youth. ANR pursues an action-oriented program of policy and legislation. Visit <http://www.no-smoke.org/>.

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