



Written Testimony in support of SB 259 to the Senate Finance Committee

February 15, 2023

Submitted by Meghan Kissell, Regional Advocacy Director, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids submits these written comments in support of SB 259: Business Regulation - Flavored Tobacco Products - Prohibition. The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids is the nation's largest non-profit, non-governmental advocacy organization solely devoted to reducing tobacco use and its deadly toll by advocating for public policies that prevent kids from using tobacco, help smokers quit and protect everyone from secondhand smoke.

For decades, the tobacco industry has been using flavored products to hook kids into a lifetime of addiction. First with menthol cigarettes, then with flavored chew and cigars, and now most recently with a bewildering variety of flavored e-cigarettes. Over 15,000 flavors¹ have been introduced to the marketplace in the last 10 years and the impact on youth addiction has been both clear and devastating.

These products are available in a wide assortment of flavors – like gummy bear, cotton candy, peanut butter cup, cookies 'n cream and pop rocks for e-cigarettes and chocolate, watermelon, lemonade and cherry dynamite for cigars. Tobacco companies are making and marketing deadly and addictive products that look and taste like a new line of flavors from a Ben and Jerry's ice cream store.

Flavors hook kids by improving the taste and reducing the harshness of tobacco products, making them more appealing and easier for beginners to try the product and ultimately become addicted. Menthol is especially effective at doing this, as it cools and numbs the throat, reducing the harshness of cigarette smoke. Although it has been used historically in combustible cigarettes, cigars and smokeless tobacco products; menthol is now one of the most popular e-cigarette flavors as well as being the cigarette that 41% of high school smokers use.²

Ninety-five percent of all tobacco users start their addictions before they turn 21,³ and 80% of kids who have ever used tobacco started with a flavored product.⁴ Research has proven that the two factors that are most likely to determine whether kids get addicted to tobacco are price and the availability of flavors. If tobacco is cheap, and flavors are available, kids are more likely to start smoking or vaping. The continued availability of flavored tobacco products puts all of our kids at risk.

¹ Hsu, G, et al., "Evolution of Electronic Cigarette Brands from 2013-2014 to 2016-2017: Analysis of Brand Websites," *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 20(3), published online March 12, 2018.

² Gentzke, A, et al., "Tobacco Product Use and Associated Factors Among Middle and High School Students—National Youth Tobacco Survey, United States, 2021," *MMWR* 71(5): 1-29, March 10, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/ss/pdfs/ss7105a1-H.pdf>.

³ See Table 2-8 in Institute of Medicine, *Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products*, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2015, <http://iom.nationalacademies.org/Reports/2015/TobaccoMinimumAgeReport.aspx>

⁴ Ambrose, BK, et al., "Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, published online October 26, 2015.

This bill, which would ban the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Maryland, would have a dramatic impact on reducing tobacco among youth, and would help curb the long-term illness, disease and death caused by tobacco addiction across the state. Maryland has long been a national leader in its commitment to reducing the death and disease from tobacco use, so it is heartening to see that you continue to take thoughtful, evidenced-based steps to reduce the number of kids who start using tobacco and help tobacco users quit. Even though Maryland has made great strides in reducing tobacco use, tobacco use remains the number one preventable cause of premature death and disease in Maryland and the nation, killing over 7,500 residents every year.⁵

Recognizing the public health burden of flavored tobacco products, and the failure of the federal government to step in decisively, cities and states around the country are taking action. In November 2019, Massachusetts became the first state to restrict the sale of all flavored tobacco products. This was soon followed by prohibitions on the sale of flavored e-cigarettes in New Jersey, New York and Rhode Island, and in November 2023, California voters supported a prohibition on the sale of most flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes. Passage of SB 259 is the best way for Maryland to join this trend of putting the lives and health of future generations first and finally putting an end to the cycle of addiction that the tobacco industry, and their flavored tobacco products, have perpetrated for far too long.

Menthol Cigarettes Increase Youth Tobacco Use

While e-cigarette use justifiably gets a lot of attention, no other flavored product contributes more to the death and disease caused by tobacco use than menthol cigarettes. The scientific evidence leaves no doubt that menthol cigarettes increase the number of people, particularly kids who try smoking, become addicted and die a premature death as a result. Banning menthol cigarettes addresses both a critical public health issue and a matter of social justice.

Tobacco companies have long known that menthol cigarettes reduce the harshness of their products and make them easier to use by new users, almost all of whom are under age 18.⁶ Menthol imparts a cooling and soothing sensation, masking the harshness of tobacco and making it easier for beginner smokers and kids to tolerate smoking. The FDA's Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC) concluded that menthol cigarettes increase the number of children who experiment with cigarettes and the number of children who become regular smokers, increasing overall youth smoking. Further, they found that people who initiate smoking using menthol cigarettes are more likely to become addicted and become long-term daily smokers.⁷

Flavors hook kids and no flavor hooks more kids than menthol cigarettes. They are the single greatest entryway to cigarette smoking. Just like other flavored tobacco products, youth smokers are more likely to use menthol cigarettes than any other age group:

- Half (50.1%) of youth who have ever tried smoking initiated with menthol flavored cigarettes.⁸
- Half (49.8%) of all current high school smokers use menthol cigarettes.⁹

⁵ National: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), "The Health Consequences of Smoking – 50 Years of Progress A Report of the Surgeon General 2014. State: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs—2014*, http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/stateandcommunity/best_practices/.

⁶ HHS, *Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults, A Report of the Surgeon General*, 2012, <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/YouthTobaccoUse/>.

⁷ TPSAC, FDA, "Menthol Cigarettes and Public Health: Review of the Scientific Evidence and Recommendations, 2011, <https://wayback.archive-it.org/7993/20170405201731/https://www.fda.gov/downloads/AdvisoryCommittees/CommitteesMeetingMaterials/TobaccoProductsScientificAdvisoryCommittee/UCM269697.pdf>.

⁸ Ambrose, BK, et al., "Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, published online October 26, 2015.

⁹ Wang, TW, et al., "Tobacco Product Use and Associated Factors Among Middle and High School Students—United States, 2019," *MMWR* 68(12), December 6, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/ss/pdfs/ss6812a1-H.pdf>.

Menthol Cigarettes Have a Devastating Impact on the Health of African Americans and Are a Major Cause of Tobacco-Related Health Disparities

The continued availability of menthol cigarettes threatens the progress Maryland has made in reducing adult smoking, particularly among African Americans. Prevalence of menthol use is highest among African Americans – 85% of all African-American smokers smoke menthol cigarettes, compared to 29% of Whites.¹⁰ The reason that such a high percentage of African-Americans who smoke use menthol cigarettes is the direct result of a conscious and deliberate decision made decades ago by the tobacco industry to target the African-American community. The net result has contributed to African Americans suffering unfairly and disproportionately from tobacco related diseases. Maryland is in a position to reduce tobacco caused disparities in this community by enacting legislation that bans the sale of menthol cigarettes. Opponents of banning menthol cigarettes like to talk about possible unintended consequences, but the undeniable consequences from menthol smoking are higher rates of death and disease, with a disproportionate impact among African Americans.

Both TPSAC's and FDA's own scientific analyses conclude that menthol cigarettes are associated with increased nicotine dependence and reduced success in smoking cessation.¹¹ The impact is greatest for African Americans, who predominantly smoke menthol cigarettes. African Americans generally have higher levels of nicotine dependence as a consequence of their preference for mentholated cigarettes.¹² While research shows that African American smokers are highly motivated to quit smoking and are more likely than White smokers to have made a quit attempt and used counseling services in the previous year, they are less likely than White smokers to successfully quit smoking.¹³ Data from the 2015 National Health Interview Survey show that, among smokers who made a quit attempt in the past year, only 4.9% of African Americans remained abstinent after 6 months, compared to 7.1% of Whites.¹⁴

Smoking kills 45,000 African American each year.¹⁵ Lung cancer is the second most common cancer in both African-American men and women, but it kills more African Americans than any other type of cancer.¹⁶ While the gap has been narrowing, from 2011-2016 the average incidence rate of lung and bronchial cancers was still 15% higher in African-American men compared to white men and the average

¹⁰ Villanti, A., et al., "Changes in the prevalence and correlates of menthol cigarette use in the USA, 2004–2014," *Tobacco Control*, published online October 20, 2016

¹¹ TPSAC, Menthol Cigarettes and Public Health: Review of the Scientific Evidence and Recommendations, July 21, 2011 <http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AdvisoryCommittees/CommitteesMeetingMaterials/TobaccoProductsScientificAdvisoryCommittee/UCM269697.pdf>

¹² FDA, "Preliminary Scientific Evaluation of the Possible Public Health Effects of Menthol Versus Nonmenthol Cigarettes," <http://www.fda.gov/downloads/ScienceResearch/SpecialTopics/PeerReviewofScientificInformationandAssessments/UCM361598.pdf>, 2013;

Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee, FDA, "Menthol Cigarettes and Public Health: Review of the Scientific Evidence and Recommendations," 2011, <http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AdvisoryCommittees/CommitteesMeetingMaterials/TobaccoProductsScientificAdvisoryCommittee/UCM269697.pdf>; Alexander, LA, et al., "Why we must continue to investigate menthol's role in the African American smoking paradox," *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, 18(S1): S91-S101, 2016;

¹³ See e.g., CDC, "Quitting Smoking Among Adults—United States, 2000-2015," *MMWR*, 65(52): 1457-1464, January 6, 2017, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/pdfs/mm6552a1.pdf>. Royce, J, et al., "Smoking cessation factors among African Americans and Whites: COMMIT Research Group," *American Journal of Public Health* 83(2):220-6, February 1993.

<https://www.fda.gov/advisoryCommittees/CommitteesMeetingMaterials/tobaccoproductsScientificAdvisoryCommittee/default.htm>

¹⁴ CDC, "Quitting Smoking Among Adults—United States, 2000-2015," *MMWR*, 65(52): 1457-1464, January 6, 2017, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/pdfs/mm6552a1.pdf>.

¹⁵ US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), "Tobacco Use Among US Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups—African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics: A Report of the Surgeon General," 1998, http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/1998/complete_report/pdfs/complete_report.pdf.

¹⁶ American Cancer Society, "Cancer Facts & Figures for African Americans, 2016-2018," 2016, <http://www.cancer.org/acs/groups/content/@editorial/documents/document/acspc-047403.pdf>.

death rate was 18% higher in African-American men compared to white men.¹⁷ If current smoking rates persist, an estimated 1.6 million black Americans alive today under the age of 18 will become regular smokers, and about 500,000 will die prematurely from a tobacco-related disease.¹⁸ In 2011, TPSAC estimated that by 2020, 4,700 excess deaths in the African American community will be attributable to menthol in cigarettes, and over 460,000 African Americans will have started smoking because of menthol in cigarettes.^{xvii}

In addition to the documented disparity in menthol cigarette use among African Americans, new research shows that use of menthol cigarettes is also disproportionately high among Hispanic smokers, lesbian, gay, and bisexual smokers, smokers with mental health problems, socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, and pregnant women.¹⁹

Prohibiting the sale of menthol cigarettes will help to reverse health disparities and accelerate the decline in smoking rates across Maryland. Cigarette sales data show that declines in menthol cigarette sales lag behind those of non-menthol cigarettes. From 2009 to 2018, sales of non-menthol cigarettes have declined by 33.1% nationally, while sales of menthol cigarettes have declined by only 8.2%. Of the decline in cigarette sales between 2009 and 2018, 91% is attributable to non-menthol cigarettes.²⁰ By reducing smoking cessation, menthol has slowed the progress in reducing overall smoking.

The Tobacco Industry Targets African Americans and Youth with Menthol Cigarette Marketing

The tobacco industry wants you to believe that African Americans have always smoked menthol cigarettes, but the use of menthol cigarettes among African Americans seen today is no coincidence and it doesn't reflect an inherent preference for menthol cigarettes by African Americans. This disparity is a direct result of a decades-long marketing campaign by the tobacco industry. Just 5% of African Americans smoked menthol cigarettes in the early 1950's; by 1968 the number had risen to 14%, and today the number is now well over 80%.²¹ Make no mistake—this is a crisis that is the direct result of the conscious decisions of the major tobacco companies.

¹⁷ American Cancer Society, *Cancer Facts & Figures 2019*, <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/annual-cancer-facts-and-figures/2019/cancer-facts-and-figures-2019.pdf>.

¹⁸ HHS, "Tobacco Use Among US Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups—African Americans, American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics: A Report of the Surgeon General," 1998, http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/1998/complete_report/pdfs/complete_report.pdf.

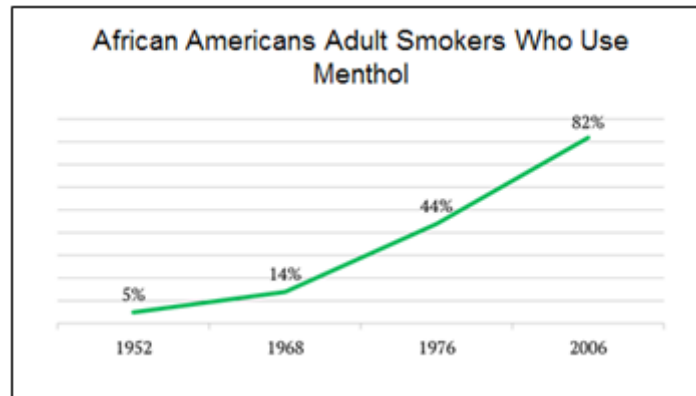
¹⁹ Cristine D. Delnevo, et al., "Banning Menthol Cigarettes: A Social Justice Issue Long Overdue," *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, 22(10): 1673-1675, 2020.

²⁰ Christine D. Delnevo, et al., *Assessment of Menthol and Nonmenthol Cigarette Consumption in the US, 2000 to 2018*, 3 JAMA Network Open e2013601, 2020, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2769132>.

²¹ Slide credit: Phillip S. Gardiner http://www.acbhcs.org/tobacco/docs/conference/Dr_Gardiner_Tob_Industry_AA_Menthol.pdf
Sources include: Gardiner, PS, "The African Americanization of menthol cigarette use in the United States," *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, February 2004; Roper, B.W. (1953). *A Study of People's Cigarette Smoking Habits and Attitudes Volume I*. Philip Morris, Bates No. 2022239249; MSA, Inc. (1978) *The Growth of Menthols, 1933 -1977*; Brown & Williamson, Bates No. 670586709-785; National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2004-2008.

Slide Courtesy of Phillip S. Gardiner

http://www.acbhcs.org/tobacco/docs/conference/Dr_Gardiner_Tob_Industry_AA_Me



Decades of research and the tobacco industry's internal documents demonstrate that the industry knowingly employed campaigns and strategies to aggressively target African Americans. Dating back to the 1950s, the tobacco industry has targeted these communities with marketing for menthol cigarettes through sponsorship of community and music events, targeted magazine advertising, youthful imagery, and marketing in the retail environment. Many of these efforts, including the Kool Inner City Music Program and the Newport Van Program, which distributed free samples of menthol cigarettes, targeted African American neighborhoods in cities like Baltimore.²²

The tobacco industry has also used popular African American magazines like *Ebony* and *Jet* to advertise menthol cigarettes to African Americans since the 1960s, and this practice continues today. From 1998 to 2002, *Ebony*, a magazine tailored to the African American culture, was 9.8 times more likely than *People* to contain ads for menthol cigarettes.²³ An assessment of menthol cigarette ads run from June 2012 to February 2013 found that the tobacco industry spent an estimated \$31 million on menthol cigarette direct mail, email, print and online advertisements in just a 9-month period. During this time, 61 percent of Newport print ads featured at least one African-American model. These ads ran in twenty publications including *Jet*, *Ebony*, and *Essence*, which have predominantly African-American readership.²⁴

²² Yerger, VB, et al., "Racialized geography, corporate activity, and health disparities: Tobacco industry targeting of inner cities," *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 18: 10-38, 2007. See also R.J. Reynolds. *Black Street Scenes: review and recommendations*. Winston-Salem, NC: R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, 1983. Available at <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/onb19d00>.

²³ Landrine, H, et al., "Cigarette advertising in Black, Latino and White magazines, 1998-2002: An exploratory investigation," *Ethnic Disparities* 15(1):63-7, 2005.

²⁴ Richardson, A, et al., "How the industry is marketing menthol cigarettes: the audience, the message, and the medium," *Tobacco Control*, 24: 594-600, 2015.

1984

Kool salutes Black History Month.



Black contributions in music are legendary. In sports, standards are set, and sustained by Blacks. In fact, Black achievement has grown to affect every part of our society.

As the list of Black American names grows, these political leaders are effecting changes long overlooked. A Black educator in Chicago has challenged the very basis of teaching young people to read. Martin Luther King has become the first Black to be honored by a national holiday.

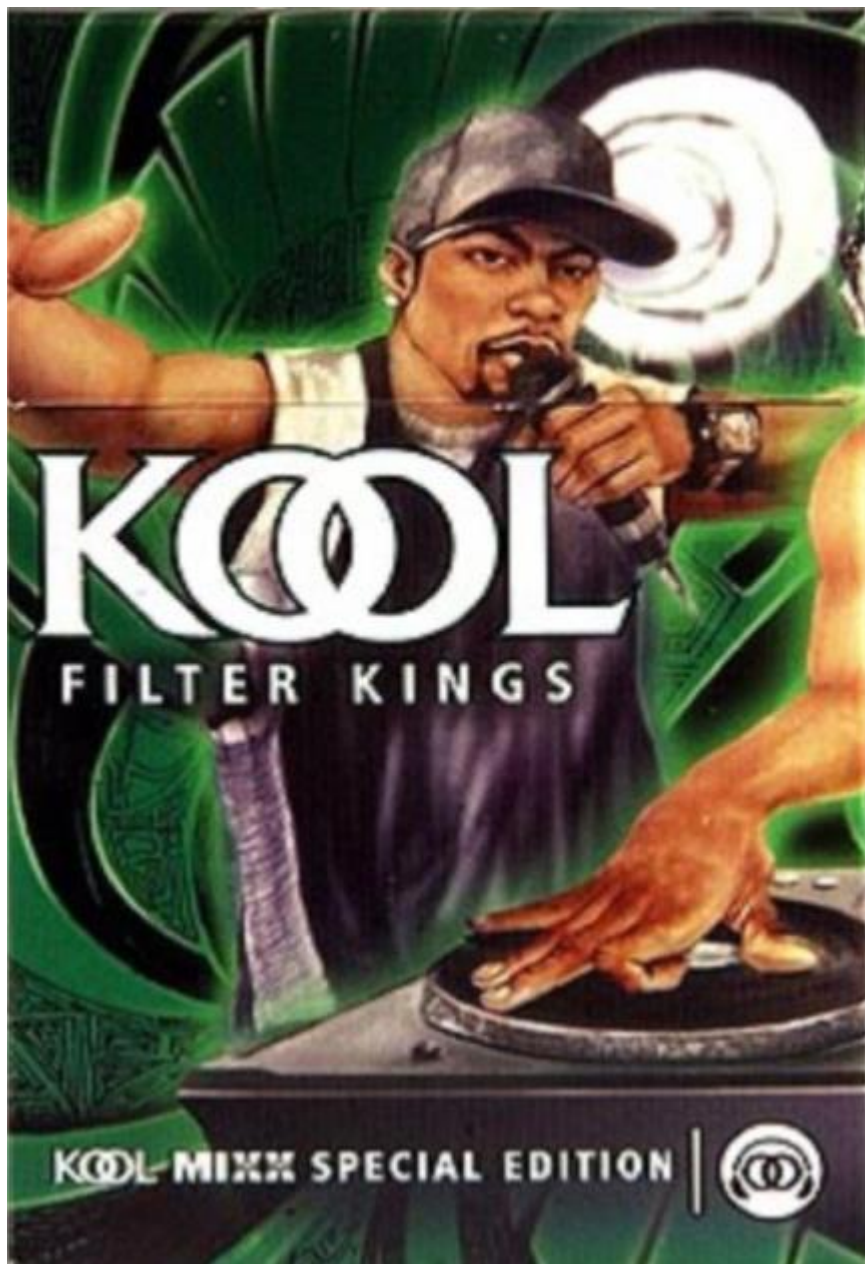
Progress in the Black Community in the past 25 years has been remarkable. Kool has been there every step of the way. We salute the strides made to get here, and look eagerly forward to continued gains.

10 mg. "tar," 1.1 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method. "tar," 1.2 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette. FTC Report MAR. 83.



Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking is Dangerous to Your Health!

There's only one way to play it.





Images courtesy of *Stanford Research Into the Impact of Advertising (SRITA)* and *TrinketsandTrash.org*.

In magazines and other marketing materials, the industry used advertisements characterized by slogans, relevant and specific messages, or images that have a great appeal among those in the black community or depict African Americans in an appealing light.²⁵ In 2004, Brown & Williamson started an ad campaign for their Kool brand cigarettes clearly aimed at youth—and African-American youth, in particular. The Kool Mixx campaign featured images of young rappers, disc jockeys and dancers on cigarette packs and in advertising. The campaign also included radio giveaways with cigarette purchases and a Hip-Hop disc jockey competition in major cities around the country. The themes, images, radio giveaways and music involved in the campaign all clearly have tremendous appeal to youth, especially African-American youth. Attorneys General from several states promptly filed motions against Brown & Williamson for violating the Master Settlement Agreement.²⁶

This targeting continues today: magazine advertisements continue to target African Americans and menthol cigarettes continue to be heavily advertised, widely available, and priced cheaper in certain African American communities, making them more appealing, particularly to price-sensitive youth.²⁷ Nationally, Newport cigarettes (the most popular menthol brand among African Americans) are significantly less expensive in neighborhoods with higher proportions of African Americans.²⁸ A wealth of research indicates that African-American neighborhoods have a disproportionate number of tobacco retailers, more price discounts for tobacco products, pervasive tobacco marketing, and in particular, more marketing of menthol products.²⁹

²⁵ Hutchinson, EO, "Joe Camel Dominants More Than Billboards in Black America," June 23, 1997, <http://www.pacificnews.org/jinn/stories/3.13/970623-cigarettes.html>

²⁶ Hafez, N, & Ling, P, "Finding the Kool Mixx: how Brown & Williamson used music marketing to sell cigarettes," *Tobacco Control*, 15: 359-366, 2006.

²⁷ Rodriguez, D, et al., "Predictors of tobacco outlet density nationwide: a geographic analysis," *Tobacco Control* 22(5):349-55, 2013. See also Lee, JG, et al., "Inequalities in tobacco outlet density by race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, 2012, USA: results from the ASPIRE Study," *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 71(5):487-492, 2017. Henriksen, L, et al., "Targeted Advertising, Promotion, and Price for Menthol Cigarettes in California High School Neighborhoods," *Nicotine & Tobacco Research* 14(1):116-21, 2012.

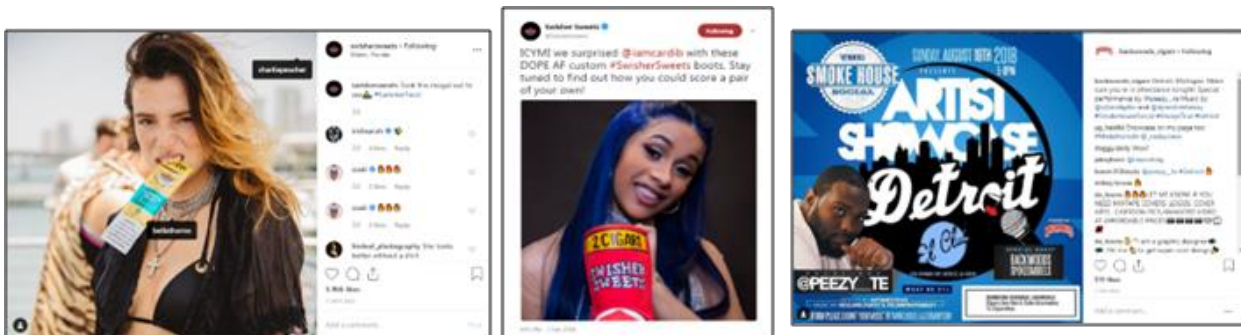
²⁸ Resnick, EA, et al., *Cigarette Pricing Differs by U.S. Neighborhoods—A BTG Research Brief*. Chicago, IL: Bridging the Gap Program, Health Policy Center, Institute for Health Research and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2012, www.bridgingthegapresearch.org.

²⁹ Moreland-Russell, S, et al., "Disparities and Menthol Marketing: Additional Evidence in Support of Point of Sale Policies," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 10: 4571-4583, 2013. Schleicher, N, et al., "Tobacco Marketing in California's Retail Environment (2008-2011), Final report for the California Tobacco Advertising Survey. Stanford, CA: Stanford Prevention Research Center, July 2013. Henriksen, L., et al., "Targeted Advertising, Promotion, and Price for Menthol Cigarettes in California High School Neighborhoods," *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, June 24, 2011. Seidenberg, AB, "Cigarette Advertising Differs by Community Demographic Profile," *American Journal of Health Promotion* 24(6):e26-e31, July/August 2010.

Flavored Cigars Remain Popular Among Youth, Especially African Americans

In recent years, cigars have surpassed cigarettes in popularity among young people, and they are disproportionately used by Black youth. In Maryland, 7.5% of high school boys are current cigar smokers (versus 3.5% nationally).³⁰

A primary reason for the popularity of cigars among youth is the wide array of available flavors. In fact, 73.8% of youth cigar smokers smoked cigars “because they come in flavors I like.”³¹ Flavored cigars have proliferated in recent years and now make up more than half the U.S. cigar market.³² Sales of cigars (i.e., large cigars, cigarillos, and small cigars) have more than doubled between 2000 and 2019, and much of the growth is attributable to smaller types of cigars, many of which are flavored and inexpensive (e.g., 3 or 4 cigars for 99 cents).³³ There are over 250 cigar flavors, including of “Banana Smash,” Brownie, and Strawberry Kiwi.³⁴ Cheap, sweet cigars can serve as an entry product for kids to a lifetime of smoking.



Similar to e-cigarettes, cigars are marketed using social media, hip hop and rap music event sponsorship, celebrity endorsements and point-of-sale promotions.³⁵

³⁰ CDC, 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Available at <http://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/>.

³¹ Ambrose, BK, et al., “Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among US Youth Aged 12-17 Years, 2013-2014,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, published online October 26, 2015.

³² Delnevo, CD, Giovenco, DP, & Miller, EJ, “Changes in the Mass-merchandise Cigar Market since the Tobacco Control Act,” *Tobacco Regulatory Science*, 3(2 Suppl 1):S8-S16, 2017.

³³ U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB), Tobacco Statistics.

³⁴ Delnevo, CD, et al., “Changes in the mass-merchandise cigar market since the Tobacco Control Act,” *Tobacco Regulatory Science*, 3(2 Suppl 1): S8-S16, 2017.

³⁵ Ganz, O, et al., “Swisher Sweets ‘Artist Project’: using musical events to promote cigars,” *Tobacco Control*, published online February 8, 2018.

FDA has concluded that “all cigars pose serious negative health risks” and that “all cigar use is harmful and potentially addictive.”³⁶ According to the National Cancer Institute, smoking cigars causes serious health consequences, including cancer of the oral cavity, larynx, esophagus and lung, and cigar smokers are also at increased risk for aortic aneurysms.³⁷ Each year, about 9,000 Americans die prematurely from regular cigar use.³⁸ Cigar smoke is composed of the same toxic and carcinogenic constituents found in cigarette smoke.³⁹

In addition, there is mounting evidence that youth use of cigars is associated with subsequent uptake of cigarette smoking. According to an analysis of data from the FDA’s PATH study, decreasing the cigar use among youth could prevent up to 4.6% of youth cigarette initiation overall and 9.1% among Black youth specifically.⁴⁰

E-cigarette Use by Youth Remains A Serious Public Health Concern

Make no mistake – the e-cigarette epidemic is an epidemic of historic proportions and its devastating impact on Maryland’s youth is the direct result of deliberate decisions made by tobacco companies/e-cigarette companies to follow the same path tobacco companies have always followed - maximize sales and profits without regard to the consequences or the impact on our citizens and youth. In Maryland, 27.4% of high school students were current tobacco product users in 2019, an increase from 21.6% in 2017.⁴¹

When e-cigarettes were introduced, the e-cigarette industry claimed the target was adult smokers who could not quit. The reality has been entirely the opposite. E-cigarettes have been marketed in over 15,000 flavors that have fueled use by our kids.⁴² They are sold in devices that deliver potent doses of nicotine in a manner that masks its risks and leads to rapid, intense addiction. They are packaged as sleek, high-tech devices that youth who would never consider smoking perceive as cool and risk free and that enable youth to use without being discovered by parents or teachers. And they are marketed on social media websites popular with youth using images identical to those used by the cigarette industry to attract generations of kids.

There is no doubt that e-cigarettes are reversing decades of progress that Maryland has made in reducing youth tobacco use and are addicting a new generation of kids.

Flavored E-Cigarettes Have Fueled the Popularity of These Products Among Kids

The evidence is clear that flavored e-cigarettes, like mint, mango and gummy bear, have fueled this epidemic. In recent years, there has been an explosion of sweet-flavored e-cigarettes. As of 2017, there were more than 15,500 unique e-cigarette flavors available online, including many kid-friendly flavors like gummy bear, cotton candy, and peanut butter cup.⁴³

³⁶ 81 Federal Register 29020, 29022 (May 10, 2016).

³⁷ NCI, *Cigars: Health Effects and Trends. Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 9*, 1998, http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/Brp/tcrb/monographs/9/m9_complete.pdf. See also, Baker, F, et al., “Health Risks Associated with Cigar Smoking,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 284(6):735-740, 2000. See also, Shapiro, JA, Jacobs, EJ, Thun, MJ, “Cigar Smoking in Men and Risk of Death From Tobacco-Related Cancers,” *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, 92(4):333-7, February 16, 2000.

³⁸ Nonnemaker, J, et al., “Mortality and Economic Costs from Regular Cigar use in the United States, 2010,” *American Journal of Public Health* 104(9):e-86-91, September 2014.

³⁹ NCI, *Cigars: Health Effects and Trends*, 1998. Chang, CM, et al., “Systematic review of cigar smoking and all cause and smoking related mortality,” *BMC Public Health*, doi 10.1186/s12889-015-1617-5, 2015.

⁴⁰ Stokes, A, et al., “Racial/Ethnic Differences in Associations of Noncigarette Tobacco Product Use with Subsequent Initiation of Cigarettes in US Youth,” *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, published online September 19, 2020.

⁴¹ CDC, 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Available at <http://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/>.

⁴² Hsu, G, et al., “Evolution of Electronic Cigarette Brands from 2013-2014 to 2016-2017: Analysis of Brand Websites,” *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 20(3), published online March 12, 2018

⁴³ Zhu, S-H, et al., “Evolution of Electronic Cigarette Brands from 2013-2014 to 2016-2017: Analysis of Brand Websites,” *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 20(3), published online March 12, 2018.



Research shows that flavored products are not only popular among youth, but play a role in initiation and uptake of tobacco products. As the recent Surgeon General Report on Smoking Cessation succinctly stated, “the role of flavors in promoting initiation of tobacco product use among youth is well established.”⁴⁴ The 2016 Surgeon General Report on e-cigarettes concluded that flavors are among the most commonly cited reasons for using e-cigarettes among youth and young adults.⁴⁵

If anything, these official government figures under report the percentage of youth who use flavored e-cigarettes. Prior to schools being closed due to COVID-19, if you spoke with any teacher, school principal or high school student, they would tell you that virtually every kid who uses an e-cigarette, uses a flavored e-cigarette. It is the reason that banning flavored e-cigarettes is an essential step in reversing the youth e-cigarette epidemic. Anything less will fail.

As with menthol cigarettes, e-cigarettes didn’t become popular with kids by accident. E-cigarette makers have introduced products with thousands of flavors that appeal to young people and engaged in the kind of marketing that mirrors what the cigarette industry did for decades. The 2016 Surgeon General Report on e-cigarettes concluded that, **“E-cigarettes are marketed by promoting flavors and using a wide variety of media channels and approaches that have been used in the past for marketing conventional tobacco products to youth and young adults.”**⁴⁶

The use of flavors in e-cigarette products is of even greater concern because e-cigarettes are the subject of extensive advertising campaigns, and there is evidence that young people are exposed to significant amounts of e-cigarette advertising. By mimicking the tobacco industry’s strategies, including celebrity endorsements, slick TV and magazine advertisements, and sports and music sponsorships, e-cigarette advertising has effectively reached youth and young adults. The 2019 NYTS found that 7 out of 10 middle and high school students—18.3 million youth—report being exposed to e-cigarette advertisements.⁴⁷

Nicotine Use Has Serious Health Consequences for Youth

Though there is insufficient research on the long-term effects of using e-cigarettes in general, there is a growing body of evidence of immediate harms, many of which are caused by the intense addiction caused by the high levels of nicotine these products deliver. Nicotine is a highly addictive drug and young people are especially vulnerable to nicotine addiction. Nicotine can have lasting damaging effects on adolescent brain development, because brain development continues until about age 25. According to the Surgeon General, “because the adolescent brain is still developing, nicotine use during this critical period can disrupt the formation of brain circuits that control attention, learning, and susceptibility to

⁴⁴ HHS, Office of the Surgeon General, “Smoking Cessation: A Report of the Surgeon General,” 2020 <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2020-cessation-sgr-full-report.pdf>.

⁴⁵ HHS, *E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults. A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2016.

⁴⁶ HHS, *E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults. A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2016.

⁴⁷ Gentzke, A, et al., “Tobacco Product Use and Associated Factors Among Middle and High School Students—National Youth Tobacco Survey, United States, 2021,” *MMWR* 71(5): 1-29, March 10, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/ss/pdfs/ss7105a1-H.pdf>.

addiction.”⁴⁸ Nicotine can also prime the brain for addiction to other drugs.⁴⁹ Because of these risks, the Surgeon General found that, “The use of products containing nicotine in any form among youth, including in e-cigarettes, is unsafe.”⁵⁰

E-cigarette use, has permeated the daily life of hundreds of thousands of youth. It is clear that large numbers of teen e-cigarette users are struggling with nicotine addiction and withdrawal. The problem is so bad that FDA convened a public hearing to gather input on how to help youth addicted to the nicotine in e-cigarettes. No one is quite sure how to help these youth quit. Banning flavored e-cigarettes will prevent these kids from ever getting hooked.

Youth E-Cigarette Users Are At Increased Risk of Smoking Cigarettes

E-cigarettes are addicting a new generation of kids and threaten to reverse decades of progress in reducing youth tobacco use. Alarming, evidence also continues to build that e-cigarette use in young people increases the likelihood of smoking cigarettes.

- In 2016, the Surgeon General concluded that while more research is needed, evidence from several longitudinal studies suggests that e-cigarette use is “strongly associated” with the use of other tobacco products among youth and young adults, including conventional cigarettes.⁵¹
- In 2018, the National Academies of Science, Engineering & Medicine (NASEM) released a comprehensive report finding substantial evidence that e-cigarette use increases risk of ever using cigarettes among youth and young adults. The NASEM report also concluded, “There is moderate evidence that e-cigarette use increases the frequency of subsequent combustible tobacco cigarette use” among youth and young adults.⁵²
- An analysis of PATH data found that from 2013 to 2016, youth (ages 12-15) e-cigarette use was associated with more than four times the odds of trying cigarettes and nearly three times the odds of current cigarette use. The researchers estimate that this translates to over 43,000 current youth cigarette smokers who might not have become smokers without e-cigarettes.⁵³

⁴⁸ CDC, Office of the Surgeon General, “Health Care Professionals: Educate Your Young Patients About the Risks of E-cigarettes,” https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/SGR_E-Cig_Health_Care_Provider_Card_508.pdf

⁴⁹ US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), *E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults. A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2016.

⁵⁰ CDC, Office of the Surgeon General, “Know the Risks: E-Cigarettes and Young People, Frequently Asked Questions,” https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/2016_SGR_ECig_FAQ_508.pdf

⁵¹ HHS, *E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults. A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2016. See also, Leventhal, AM, et al., “Association of Electronic Cigarette Use With Initiation of Combustible Tobacco Product Smoking in Early Adolescence,” *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 314(7): 700-707, 2015. Wills, Thomas A, et al., “Longitudinal study of e-cigarette use and onset of cigarette smoking among high school students in Hawaii,” *Tobacco Control*, published online first January 25, 2016. Wills, TA, et al., “E-cigarette use is differentially related to smoking onset among lower risk adolescents,” *Tobacco Control*, published online August 19, 2016. Barrington-Trimis, JL, et al., “E-Cigarettes and Future Cigarette Use,” *Pediatrics*, 138(1), published online July 2016.

⁵² Barrington-Trimis, JL, et al., “E-Cigarettes and Future Cigarette Use,” *Pediatrics*, 138(1), published online July 2016. Wills, TA, et al., “E-cigarette use is differentially related to smoking onset among lower risk adolescents,” *Tobacco Control*, published online August 19, 2016.

⁵³ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018. *Public health consequences of e-cigarettes*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <http://nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2018/public-health-consequences-of-e-cigarettes.aspx> .

⁵⁴ Berry, KM, et al., “Association of Electronic Cigarette Use with Subsequent Initiation of Tobacco Cigarettes in US Youths,” *JAMA Network Open*, 2(2), published online February 1, 2019.

Multiple studies have also demonstrated that many youth who use e-cigarettes are kids who are among those least at risk of cigarette smoking. For these kids, e-cigarettes are not replacing cigarettes, they are turning non-tobacco users into tobacco users.⁵⁴

FDA Has Failed To Use Its Regulatory Authority Over E-Cigarettes to Protect Kids

Although Congress gave FDA broad regulatory authority over tobacco products in the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009 (Tobacco Control Act), the agency has largely failed to use that authority to regulate e-cigarettes.⁵⁵ Delayed regulation by the FDA necessitates state action to protect Maryland's youth.

Despite the requirement in the Tobacco Control Act that new tobacco products (i.e. those introduced after February 15, 2007) obtain an FDA order authorizing their marketing,⁵⁶ not a single e-cigarette product currently on the market has been reviewed and authorized by the FDA. Thus, it is essential for Maryland and other states to utilize their authority to protect the health of its residents and especially its youth.

Conclusion

We are facing an epidemic in youth e-cigarette use. Parents, school officials, and health care providers from across the country have recognized that a new generation of young people are becoming addicted to nicotine with potentially devastating long-term consequences. In addition, largely because of the marketing of flavored cigars and menthol cigarettes, higher rates of smoking and other forms of tobacco use persist among populations the tobacco industry has targeted, especially African Americans, burdening these communities with higher rates of cancer, heart disease, and pulmonary disease attributable to tobacco use. These challenges will not go away absent strong, clear and decisive government action.

The scientific evidence leaves no doubt that flavored tobacco products, including flavored e-cigarettes and menthol cigarettes, increase the number of people, particularly kids, who initiate tobacco use and become addicted. Prohibiting the sale of menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products is an essential step toward protecting our children and our community from the tobacco industry's aggressive efforts to hook children to these dangerous, addictive products.

This issue is quite simple—it is about common sense and protecting our kids and populations that the tobacco industry has targeted and continues to target.

Eliminating health disparities and many of the factors that disproportionately impact many of our citizens can be complicated and difficult to solve. But we have the tools and ability to dramatically reduce the health disparities caused by tobacco use in our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

⁵⁴ Barrington-Trimis, JL, et al., "E-Cigarettes and Future Cigarette Use," *Pediatrics*, 138(1), published online July 2016. Wills, TA, et al., "E-cigarette use is differentially related to smoking onset among lower risk adolescents," *Tobacco Control*, published online August 19, 2016.

⁵⁵ Pub. L. No. 111-31, 123 Stat. 1776 (2009)(codified at 21 U.S.C. §§ 387-387u).

⁵⁶ 21 U.S.C §387j.