



American
Heart
Association.



December 6, 2022

George Latimer
Executive
Westchester County
148 Martine Ave
White Plains, NY 10601

Dear Mr. Latimer:

The undersigned organizations are committed to a tobacco control mission that prevents initiation of all tobacco products, promotes cessation among users, protects all from harmful secondhand exposure, and eliminates health disparities. As public health organizations, we strongly support the passage of local law 2022-461; prohibiting the sale or distribution of flavored tobacco products and respectfully urge you to sign this legislation into law.

Westchester County has a unique position to be a leader in New York State and be the first county in the State to end the sale of flavored tobacco products in a comprehensive manner. In both the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) own review of the science and that of its advisory committee tasked with researching the issue, menthol has been shown to be a starter product for youth, increase nicotine dependence, and make it more difficult to quit using tobacco, particularly for African Americans who smoke.^{1 2} Menthol is added to tobacco products and masks the harshness and soothes the irritation caused by tobacco smoke. Menthol makes it easier for people who have never used tobacco products – especially kids – to experiment with the product and ultimately become addicted. Further, menthol is used at higher rates among youth, African Americans who smoke, as well as other minorities and women.^{1 2} Eliminating the sale of menthol cigarettes and all flavored tobacco products is a step toward health equity, social justice and in the best interest of the entire County's health.

In addition to removing menthol cigarettes from the marketplace in Westchester County, the bill would also prohibit the sale of other flavored tobacco products like flavored little cigars (which come in hundreds of kid-friendly flavors) and flavored smokeless tobacco products, both of which have proven to be popular among kids. Lastly, the bill would close two loopholes in the state's flavored e-cigarette law that have weakened enforcement of this law across the state and would better protect kids in the county from these products.

¹ Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee (TPSAC). Menthol Cigarettes and Public Health: Review of the Scientific Evidence and Recommendations. Washington, D.C. 2011

² Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Preliminary Scientific Evaluation of the Possible Public Health Effects of Menthol Versus Non Menthol Cigarettes. Rockville, MD. 2013

Removing flavored tobacco products from the market will help to reduce disease and death related to the use of tobacco products by reducing youth initiation, increasing the chances of smoking cessation among people who currently smoke, and addressing health disparities experienced by communities of color, people with limited incomes, and LGBTQ+ individuals, all of whom have been heavily targeted by the tobacco industry and are far more likely to use these flavored tobacco products.

Time is of the essence. The public health threat posed by these flavored products calls for swift action. We request that you promptly sign this legislation and remove these harmful products from the market.

Sincerely,



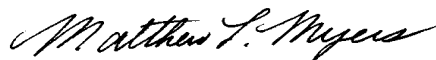
Lisa Lacasse
President
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network



Nancy A. Brown
Chief Executive Officer
American Heart Association



Harold P. Wimmer
National President and CEO
American Lung Association



Matthew L. Myers
President
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids