



October 16, 2019

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Committee on Energy & Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

We write in support of prohibiting menthol cigarettes, which is a key part of the Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act (H.R. 2339). There is overwhelming scientific evidence that menthol cigarettes have had a profound adverse effect on public health. Removing them from the market would drive down tobacco use and the death and disease it causes, particularly among youth and African Americans.

Menthol cigarettes are popular with youth. Over half of youth smokers – and seven in ten African American youth smokers – smoke menthol cigarettes. Menthol cools and numbs the throat and reduces the harshness of tobacco, making it easier and more appealing for youth to start smoking. In 2013, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a report finding that menthol cigarettes lead to increased smoking initiation among youth and young adults, greater addiction, and decreased success in quitting smoking. An FDA scientific advisory committee concluded, “Removal of menthol cigarettes from the marketplace would benefit public health in the United States.”

Smoking-related illnesses are the number-one cause of death in the African American community and claim the lives of approximately 45,000 African Americans each year. Menthol cigarettes are a major

reason why. Eighty-five percent of all African American smokers smoke menthol cigarettes, which is a direct result of a decades-long marketing campaign by the tobacco industry aimed at the African American community. African Americans generally have higher levels of nicotine dependence as a consequence of their preference for mentholated cigarettes.

Estimates of the harm menthol cigarettes cause to African Americans are alarming. The FDA advisory committee found that the marketing and availability of menthol cigarettes increases the overall prevalence of smoking and reduces smoking cessation among African Americans. In 2011, it estimated that by 2020, 4,700 excess deaths in the African-American community will be attributable to menthol cigarettes, and over 460,000 African Americans will have started smoking because of menthol cigarettes.

Our organizations fully support the menthol prohibition in the Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act. It will protect public health and save lives. We look forward to working with you to advance this bill.

Sincerely,

Action on Smoking & Health
African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council
American Academy of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Dental Research
American Association for Respiratory Care
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Cardiology
American College of Physicians
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Dental Education Association
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
American Medical Association
American Public Health Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Thoracic Society
Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Big Cities Health Coalition

Black Lives / Black Lungs
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
CATCH Global Foundation, Inc.
Catholic Health Association of the United States
ClearWay Minnesota
Community Anti - Drug Coalitions of America
Counter Tools
Eta Sigma Gamma – National Health Education Honorary
LUNgevity Foundation
March of Dimes
National African American Tobacco Prevention Network
National Association of County & City Health Officials
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of School Nurses
National Center for Health Research
National Medical Association
National Network of Public Health Institutes
Oncology Nursing Society
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Respiratory Health Association
Society for Public Health Education
Society for Research on Nicotine & Tobacco
Students Against Destructive Decisions

CC: House Committee on Energy & Commerce Members