



## **L.A. Families Fighting Flavored Tobacco Commends LA County Board of Supervisors for Moving to End Flavored Tobacco Sales**

*More than 200 people rallied after the Board of Supervisors' vote in response to youth e-cigarette epidemic; 135% increase in kids using e-cigarettes in last two years alone*

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LOS ANGELES—More than 200 hundred parents, students, doctors, and experts in the L.A. Families Fighting Flavored Tobacco coalition rallied Tuesday in support of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors' vote to advance an ordinance to end the sale of flavored tobacco in Los Angeles. The final vote on the ordinance is scheduled for Oct. 1.

To protect all L.A. teens' health, the coalition called on the Board of Supervisors to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products: including flavored e-cigarettes, cigars and menthol cigarettes in unincorporated parts of Los Angeles County. According to the 2017-18 California Student Tobacco Survey, 83% of high school students who use tobacco use flavored products.

New federal survey data shows that youth use of e-cigarettes continues to skyrocket. There has been a 135% increase in youth use of e-cigarettes in the last two years alone, with 5 million kids now using these products. The overwhelming majority of these kids use flavored products and got started with flavored products.

Meanwhile, more than half (54%) of youth ages 12-17 years who smoke use menthol cigarettes, and nearly 60% of Los Angeles youth cigarette smokers have used menthol cigarettes in the last 30 days. Studies also show that young smokers are more likely to use menthol cigarettes than any other age group, and young people who start smoking using menthol cigarettes are more likely to become addicted and to become long-term daily smokers.

**Members of the coalition praised the Board of Supervisors for advancing the ordinance to end the sale of flavored tobacco in Los Angeles County, saying:**

"They called us pawns and told us to go back to school, but we speak with true passion and we are here to fight," said **Lisa Lu, a senior at San Marino High School** and president of the student group International Youth Tobacco Control. "We really appreciate the Board of Supervisors for listening to our stories of how flavored tobacco products are harming our peers, campuses, and communities. This epidemic needs to be stopped."



“The tobacco industry has been pimping the African American community for too long. Menthol has been the industry’s most effective recruitment tool. Because of menthol, African American communities experience the greatest burden of tobacco-related mortality of any racial or ethnic group in the United States,” said the **Rev. John Cager III, Pastor of Ward African Methodist Episcopal Church**. “When the FDA banned flavored cigarettes in 2009, they left an exemption for menthol because it was just too profitable for the tobacco industry. The Supervisors must reverse this mistake and make Los Angeles County a leader in putting Black lives before Big Tobacco.”

“Doctors agree we have to fight this public health epidemic now,” said **Dr. Tomás Torices, the executive director of the Southern California chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics**. “Teenagers are able to purchase flavored vaping products in so-called ‘adults-only’ stores because no one checks their IDs. Science tells us that flavors increase demand for traditional tobacco products, as well as e-cigarettes. That’s why I’m in full support of ending all flavored tobacco sales.”

“This swift action is exactly the type of protections we would like to see. Flavored tobacco products are a ruthless strategy by Big Tobacco to transform our kids into addicted tobacco users through flavored starter kits,” said **American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network LA Government Relations Director Primo Castro**. “Make no mistake—the industry shamelessly tries to maximize profits while its customers suffer death and disease, and local taxpayers continue to foot the bill for tobacco-related illnesses.”

Members of the coalition include the Tobacco-Free Kids Action Fund, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, the American Lung Association, the American Heart Association, the African-American Tobacco Control Leadership Council, United Parents and Students, International Youth Tobacco Control, BREATHE California of Los Angeles County, and Community Coalition.