



LA City Council Committee Bows to Tobacco Industry, Ignores Science and Public Testimony to Add Exemptions that will Hurt Kids to Flavored Tobacco Ordinance

Turning their backs on the health of African-Americans and young people, three members of the Council's Health Committee Advanced a Weakened Ordinance

December 5, 2019

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LOS ANGELES — Members of a Los Angeles City Council committee recommended Thursday that the City Attorney draft an ordinance to end the sale of flavored tobacco citywide, but exempt menthol cigarettes and hookah lounges.

Members of the L.A. Families Fighting Flavored Tobacco coalition expressed disappointment that Councilmembers Mitch O'Farrell, David Ryu and Current Price, all members of the Health, Education, Neighborhoods, Parks, Arts, and River committee, sided with Big Tobacco over the health and safety Los Angeles' youth communities of color by making allowances for the continued sale of menthol cigarettes.

"This is a giveaway to Big Tobacco. For years, the tobacco industry has systematically targeted youth, especially youth of color, with highly addictive products to create life-long customers," said Dr. Willie Goffney, local oncology surgeon and volunteer for the Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. "It's unclear to me why the LA City Council cannot understand that even in 2019 it's the same old Big Tobacco playbook. Councilmembers Mitch O'Farrell, David Ryu and Curren Price today have moved to protect the industry rather than our youth, which is dangerous and potentially lethal."

"I'm really disappointed at the City Council and their actions today. Kids who use flavors use menthols because menthol and mint are the most popular flavors. To carve out menthol is to leave us vulnerable to life-long addiction," said Breanna Jordan, youth organizer with United Parents and Students. "The council has allowed the tobacco industry to continue targeting youth of color."

"We are extremely disappointed with the council's action today. Menthol cigarettes have caused a healthcare crisis plaguing the African-American community. Restricting the sale of menthol cigarettes would begin to undo decades of deliberate targeting of the African-American community and other communities of color by the tobacco industry. It would have



kept tobacco away from kids, made it easier for adults to make healthy choices and reverse tobacco-induced health disparities, but the council did not take bold action today,” said Carol McGruder, Co-Chair African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council. “Forget unintended consequences – the undeniable consequences of menthol cigarettes are tobacco-induced death and disease, and 45,000 Black lives lost each year.”

“We can’t delay any longer when faced with a public health epidemic and nicotine addiction that is hurting our kids and impacting learning every day,” said Virginia Escamilla, parent of two Eagle Rock High School students and volunteer with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. “LA city leaders know the right thing to do as more and more elected officials throughout the country take action to protect students. We need to stop the sale of flavored tobacco in our city now!”

From e-cigarettes to hookah, flavored tobacco products hook kids by masking the harsh taste of tobacco and nicotine. Young people who start smoking using menthol cigarettes are more likely to become addicted and long-term daily smokers. According to the 2016 National Youth Tobacco Survey, about 1 million students between 6th and 12th grade smoked hookah or water pipe in the last 30 days, and nearly three in 10 were curious about trying hookah.