

# Menthol Tobacco Products in Our Communities



## What is Menthol?<sup>1</sup>

- ★ Menthol is a flavoring that can be added to tobacco products like cigarettes and vapes.
- ★ The flavor mellows the taste of tobacco, making it easier for people to start using tobacco products and harder for them to quit.
- ★ Science shows that menthol alters nicotinic receptors making mentholated cigarettes more addictive.

## Who is Impacted by Menthol?

- ★ Youth and minority communities, predominantly LGBTQ+ and Black Americans, make up the majority of flavored tobacco users because of a concerted, decades-long effort from Big Tobacco to addict these communities. Of course, these groups also suffer disproportionate health effects.
- ★ More than half (54%) of youth ages 12-17 years who smoke use menthol cigarettes.<sup>2</sup>
- ★ 85% of African American smokers use menthol cigarettes compared to 29% of White smokers.<sup>3</sup>

## New Yorkers on Menthol Bans<sup>4</sup>

- ★ In 2021 only 28% of New Yorkers were opposed to a ban on the sale of menthol cigarettes.
- ★ In 2021 only 29% of New Yorkers opposed a ban on the sale of flavored tobacco products.

## Menthol Bans Throughout the US

Across the US, a number of cities and states have taken action against the harmful impacts of menthol.

### CHICAGO<sup>5</sup>

In December 2013, Chicago became the first city in the U.S. to restrict the sale of all flavored commercial tobacco products, including menthol. As a result of the ban, Chicago has seen a significant decrease in reported use of cigarettes among high school students, with only 3.9% smoking in 2019 compared to 10.7% in 2013.

### MASSACHUSETTS<sup>6</sup>

In December 2019, Massachusetts became the first state to enact a comprehensive flavor ban on tobacco products. Four weeks after the ban, the unadjusted sales of packs of cigarettes dramatically decreased for menthol, going from 404.93 packs sold per 1,000 people to 32.24 per 1,000 people

### CALIFORNIA<sup>7</sup>

In 2020, California lawmakers overwhelmingly passed a bipartisan law to end the sale of most flavored tobacco products, including flavored e-cigarettes, menthol cigarettes, and flavored cigars. The law was passed in response to the clear evidence that flavored products have fueled the youth e-cigarette epidemic and that the tobacco industry has continuously targeted Black Americans, youth, and other communities.

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