

**MINNESOTA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
POLICY RESOLUTION**

Regulatory Action to Reduce the Impact of Menthol Cigarettes

WHEREAS, Tobacco industry documents show that the tobacco industry used targeting strategies intentionally tailored to market menthols to African Americans, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) communities, and youth at disproportionate rates.^{1,2} Documents also revealed Lorillard Tobacco Company characterized high-school students as “the base of our business” for menthol cigarettes,³ and

WHEREAS, a 2013 U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) report showed that menthol cigarettes increase youth smoking initiation, lead to a greater addiction and decrease successes in quitting smoking.⁴ A study demonstrated that menthol levels in cigarettes were deliberately manipulated by the industry to broaden the appeal of cigarettes to youth.⁵

WHEREAS, eighty-three percent of African American youth smokers⁶ and 71 percent of LGBTQ youth smokers report smoking menthol cigarettes.⁷

WHEREAS, African Americans in Minnesota smoke at a rate of 22.3 percent.⁸ Tobacco use is the top cause of preventable death and disease among African Americans. Among adult African American smokers, 88 percent smoke menthols, compared to 26 percent of adult white smokers.⁹ Eight out of every 10 (83 percent) African American youth smokers smoke menthols.¹⁰ African Americans have the highest death rate and shortest survival rate from most cancers.¹¹

WHEREAS, members of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) communities smoke menthol cigarettes at higher rates than the general population. The smoking rate for lesbian, gay and bisexual persons in Minnesota is 25.7 percent.¹² More than 36 percent of LGBTQ smokers smoke menthol cigarettes, with LGBTQ female smokers smoking menthols at an extremely high rate (42.9 percent).¹³

WHEREAS, menthol tobacco use is a specific problem for Minnesota with 25.1 percent of smokers report smoking menthol cigarettes,¹⁴ half of Minnesota teen smokers (44.3 percent of high-school student smokers) smoke menthol cigarettes,¹⁵ and smoking-related disease rates among American Indians are at epidemic levels, and 30 percent of American Indian smokers smoke menthol cigarettes.¹⁶

WHEREAS, policies that regulate or restrict menthol tobacco products have potential to reduce tobacco addiction and improve health. Research suggests that if menthol were banned in the U.S., 39 percent of menthol smokers, including 47 percent of black menthol smokers, would quit smoking.¹⁷ Among Minnesota menthol smokers, approximately half reported they would quit smoking if menthol cigarettes were banned.¹⁸

WHEREAS, on 2016, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Board of Directors ratified a resolution to support efforts at local and state levels to restrict the sale of flavored and menthol tobacco products.¹⁹

WHEREAS, the a ban of menthol from cigarettes is supported by several public health entities, including the Truth Initiative (American Legacy Foundation), the American Cancer Society, ClearWay Minnesota, the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, the National African American Tobacco Prevention Network, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Public Health Association, the Center for American Progress and the Delta Sigma Theta sorority.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Minnesota Public Health Association:

1. Supports the rights of state and local governments to regulate menthol to the extent it is legally permissible. Potential regulatory options include restricting the sale of menthol tobacco products and restricting point-of-sale advertising.
2. Supports a federal ban on menthol in cigarettes and in all other tobacco products to reduce the impact on the public's health.
3. Support funding communities most impacted by menthol to organize from within the community and support practice-based evidence strategies that respect community tradition and knowledge.

References

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