



September 30, 2019

The Honorable Robert Garcia  
Mayor, City of Long Beach  
411 W. Ocean Blvd.  
Long Beach, CA 90802

**RE: Motion – Tobacco Flavor Ban**

Dear Mayor Garcia and Council:

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) is committed to protecting the health and well-being of the residents of Long Beach through evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN supports efforts to reduce youth tobacco use and eliminating the sale of flavored tobacco products is an important part of a comprehensive approach to preventing youth from ever beginning a deadly addiction to tobacco. **We support eliminating the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, within the city of Long Beach, and without exemptions.**

Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of death in the U.S. The 2014 U.S. Surgeon General's report found that more than 43 million Americans still smoke. It is estimated that tobacco use will cause 480,000 deaths this year in the U.S. Both opponents of smoking and purveyors of cigarettes have long recognized the significance of adolescence as the period during which smoking behaviors are typically developed. National data show that about 95 percent of adult tobacco users begin smoking before the age of 21, and most begin with a flavored product. In 2009, Congress prohibited the sale of cigarettes with flavors other than tobacco or menthol. Tobacco companies responded by expanding the types of non-cigarette tobacco products they offer, and now make most of those products available in a growing array of kid-friendly flavors. Little cigars, smokeless tobacco, hookah, and e-cigarettes are marketed in a wide variety of candy flavors with colorful packaging and deceptive names that appeal to youth.

Adolescents are still going through critical periods of brain growth and development and are especially vulnerable to the toxic effects of nicotine. A study published in the journal, *Pediatrics*, found that the earlier youth are exposed to nicotine, the less likely they will be able to quit smoking. Tobacco companies have a long history of marketing to vulnerable populations, and target youth with imagery and by marketing candy and fruit flavored tobacco. The anesthetizing effects of menthol masks the harshness of tobacco, making it more appealing to beginning smokers, and menthol smokers show greater dependence, and are less likely to quit than non-menthol smokers. Postponing youth experimentation and initiation can help reduce the number of youths who will ever begin smoking.

Removing flavored tobacco is also a social justice issue. Tobacco companies have aggressively marketed menthol to youth in communities of color, the LGBT community, and those in low income neighborhoods. These are the same communities who already bear a greater burden of health disparities and often have less access to healthcare. Increasing tobacco use in these communities increases the health disparities among the most vulnerable in our communities. Presently, more than 30 jurisdictions in places as diverse as Yolo County, Contra Costa County, and the cities of Beverly Hills and Richmond have passed strong policies.

While cigarette smoking has declined in recent years, use of menthol and other flavored products have continued to increase, especially among young people and beginning smokers. We strongly encourage this council to choose the strongest youth protections available by prohibiting the citywide sale of flavored tobacco products. Taking this important public health step will help to prevent young people in Long Beach from ever beginning this deadly addiction, as well as help to support those who are trying to quit.

Sincerely,



Primo J. Castro  
Director, Government Relations  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network