Menthol cigarettes pose an enormous public health threat. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has found that menthol cigarettes are more addictive, easier for kids to start smoking and harder for smokers to quit.

The tobacco industry has ruthlessly targeted Black Americans with marketing for menthol cigarettes. As a result, 85% of Black smokers now smoke menthols. Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death among Black Americans, claiming 45,000 Black lives each year.

About half of high school smokers use menthol cigarettes. Menthol cigarette use is also disproportionately high among LGBT smokers, smokers with mental health problems, socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, and pregnant women.

E-cigarettes are the most popular tobacco products among youth. In 2021 over 2 million youth reported current e-cigarette use. Youth are not just experimenting with e-cigarettes, but using them on a frequent basis, an indicator of serious addiction.

In 2021, 43.6% of high school e-cigarette users reported vaping on 20 or more days/month, and 27.6% reported daily use.

Flavours play a major role in youth use of e-cigarettes. 85% of youth e-cigarette users use flavored products and 70.3% say they use e-cigarettes “because they come in flavors I like”.

Flavored tobacco products play a key role in enticing new users, particularly kids, to a lifetime of addiction.
Cheap, flavored cigars – sold in hundreds of flavors like banana smash, cherry dynamite and chocolate, as well as menthol – have flooded the market in recent years and fueled the popularity of these products with kids. **Cigars are now the most popular tobacco product among Black high school students and the second most popular tobacco product, after e-cigarettes, among all high school students.**

**FLAVORED CIGARS**

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEDERAL ACTION**

1. **FDA must fulfill its promise** to issue proposed rules to prohibit menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars in April 2022. Congressional leaders should urge FDA to finalize these rulemakings in a timely manner.

2. **FDA must continue** to reject all flavored e-cigarette applications, including menthol e-cigarettes.

3. **Congress should support** increased funding for the CDC’s tobacco prevention and control efforts. With additional resources, CDC could more robustly address unacceptably high rates of e-cigarette use by youth, expand an effective media campaign that is helping adult smokers to quit, and provide targeted assistance to groups disproportionately harmed by tobacco products.

4. **Congress should expand** coverage of tobacco cessation treatments and pass the Quit Because of COVID–19 Act (H.R. 2125/S.2622) which would ensure that all individuals enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP have access to the full array of evidence–based tobacco cessation treatments.

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