



The African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council

Friday, December 1, 2017

Mayor Trish Herrera Spenser
Vice Mayor Malia Vella
Councilmember Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft
Councilmember Frank Matarrese
Councilmember Jim Oddie
Alameda City Hall
2263 Santa Clara Avenue
Alameda, CA 94501

Re: Restrict the Sale of Menthol and all Flavored Tobacco Products

The African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council (AATCLC) strongly encourages the Alameda City Council to restrict the sale of menthol and all flavored tobacco products. Restricting the sale of these products, could be an important step forward for public health in Alameda. We already know that 80% of youth's 12-17 start smoking using flavored cigarettes (Ambrose et al., 2015). Moreover, 85% African Americans adults and 94% of Black youth are using menthol products (Giovino, 2013). These striking statistics arise from the predatory marketing of these products in the Black Community, where there are more advertisements, more lucrative promotions and *cheaper prices* for menthol cigarettes compared to other communities (Henriksen et al., 2011; Seidenberg et al., 2010). If the City Council truly wants a healthier Alameda, and we believe that they do, then it is imperative that menthol and flavor restrictions be seen as a social justice issue, an issue that disproportionately impacts poorer communities; marginalized groups; and communities of color.

This is no minor matter. Menthol and flavored tobacco products are driving tobacco death and disease rates nation-wide; while the use of non-flavored tobacco cigarettes has been decreasing, the use of menthol cigarettes is on the rise, among youth and adults, and among Latinos, Blacks and whites (Villanti, 2016). Let's be clear, the majority of women smokers, smoke menthol cigarettes; the same is true for youth of all backgrounds; folks from the LGBTQ community disproportionately smoke these products; 47% of Latino smokers prefer menthol cigarettes; 62% of Puerto Ricans prefer menthol; nearly 80% of Native Hawaiians; a majority of Filipinos and a majority people with behavioral health issues, all disproportionately use these "minty" products (CDC, 2010; Fallin, 2015; Forbes, 2013; Delnevo, 2011; Hawaii State Dept. of Health, 2009; Euromonitor, 2008; Hickman, 2015). And with the introduction of well over 7700 different

flavors of e-juices for electronic cigarettes, like gummy-bear and cotton candy aimed directly at our youth (Weintraub, 2014), it seems important, if not necessary for City Council to restrict the sale of these products.

And as if to add insult to injury, the City Council should be aware that menthol allows for deeper inhalation of tobacco toxins and greater amounts of nicotine and this is what makes menthol cigarettes harder to quit compared to other cigarettes (Ton et al., 2015; Levy et al., 2011). At bottom, the “cool refreshing taste of menthol” heralded by the tobacco industry, is just a guise; ultimately, menthol allows the poisons in cigarettes and cigarillos to go down easier.

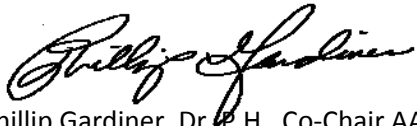
The AATCLC is calling upon the City of Alameda to join a growing number of cities around the country that are restricting the sale of menthol and all flavored tobacco products. Chicago passed restrictions in 2013; Berkeley California in 2015. Just a few weeks ago, the City of St. Paul Minnesota joined its sister city of Minneapolis in restricting the sale of these products. In September, the Oakland City Council unanimously passed an ordinance that will restrict the sale of menthol and flavored tobacco products, including e-juices, to adult tobacco shops only. Also in September, after an impassionate appeal from De Anza High School students, the Richmond City Council voted unanimously to instruct their City Attorney to draft a tobacco ordinance that would prohibit the sale of menthol and all flavored tobacco products city-wide. And, in June, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to prohibit the sale of menthol and flavored tobacco products throughout the city. Yes, this has temporarily been blocked by a tobacco industry referendum, but no one said that it was going to be easy to protect the public’s health, especially from the adjudicated racketeers.

Formed in 2008, the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council is composed of a cadre of dedicated community activists, academics, public health advocates and researchers. Even though based in California, we are national in scope and reach. We have partnered with community stakeholders, elected officials, and public health agencies, from Chicago and Minneapolis to Berkeley and San Francisco. This work has help to shape the national discussion and direction of tobacco control policy, practices, and priorities, especially as they affect the lives of Black Americans, African immigrant populations and ultimately all smokers. The AATCLC has been at the forefront in elevating the regulation of mentholated and other flavored tobacco products on the national tobacco control agenda, including testifying at the FDA hearings to remove menthol products from the market place.

The AATCLC was heartened and very appreciative to meet with Councilmember Jim Oddie. He clearly grasped the significance of restricting the sale of candy flavored poison in Alameda; the potential to stop youth from starting to smoke and to ultimately saving lives. We are hopeful that the rest of the City Council shares his sentiment.

We are all counting on you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Phillip Gardiner". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Phillip Gardiner, Dr. P.H. Co-Chair AATCLC

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Carol O. McGruder". The script is cursive and somewhat compact.

Carol McGruder, Co-Chair AATCLC

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dr. Valerie Yerger". The script is cursive, with "Dr." written at the beginning.

Valerie Yerger, N.D., Co-Chair AATCLC