



# Los Angeles Moves to Ban Flavored Tobacco Products

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

The Los Angeles City Council unilaterally voted (14-0) to end the sale of flavored tobacco products, including flavored e-cigarettes, menthol cigarettes, and flavored cigars. They instructed the city attorney to write an ordinance that would ban liquor stores and smoke shops from selling flavored tobacco products which impact adults and youth alike.

“The community successfully tackled and challenged a billion-dollar industry designed to profit from destroying the quality of life of our community,” said Carlos Leon, Lead Organizer at Community Coalition (CoCo).

“This industry has created generational harm in our families and neighbors for decades; it has put our community at higher risk with Covid due to pre-existing health conditions. It morphed itself to entice a new and younger generation. This industry overwhelmingly advertises its products to Black and Brown people in South Central LA. It incentivizes the over-concentration of smoke shops and liquor stores by our schools, parks, and churches.”

Community Coalition works to help transform the social and economic conditions in South LA that foster addiction. As part of its People First Platform, CoCo joined with LA Families Against Flavored Tobacco in the campaign to “Ban Flavored Tobacco.” Together, the organizations mobilized their members and community residents to participate in hearings, rallies, and actions to put an end to the predatory activity of large tobacco companies.

### **CoCo’s “Ban Flavored Tobacco” Campaign Timeline**

**2017-** South LA Poll highlights concentration of smoke shops in South LA as an issue

**2018 -** Nuisance abatement campaign launched

**2019-** Several cities throughout the state ban flavored tobacco

\*CoCo, with the support of Loyola Marymount University, creates report documenting the danger and the over-concentration of smoke shops

\* Ban of flavored tobacco/Menthol instituted in LA County (Part of South LA is covered)

**2020-** Ban of flavored in the State of CA passes (It is immediately challenged/blocked by the tobacco industry. It will be on the ballot in 2022.)

**2021-** Ban of Flavored tobacco/menthol in the City of LA

LA City Council President Nury Martinez and members Mitch O’Farrell, Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Mark Ridley-Thomas, Paul Krekorian, and Mike Bonin were integral in protecting the health of Los Angeles’ residents and kids as it relates to health equity.

“The Council’s action will crackdown on the tobacco industry’s most pernicious tactic for luring and addicting kids—the marketing of flavored products. And it will help end the industry’s predatory targeting of Black communities with menthol cigarettes, [which is] a form of institutional racism that has taken a devastating toll on Black lives and health is a major

cause of health disparities, and must be stopped once and for all,” said Matthew L. Myers, President, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

Unfortunately, the City Council’s ordinance language exempted certain hookah products from being sold in some establishments. Flavored products have spurred an epidemic of youth e-cigarette use, with approximately 30% of LA County’s high school students experimenting with e-tobacco products. Nationally, 3.6 million young people said they use e-cigarettes frequently or daily, which is a sign of addiction. And data shows that 83% of young e-cigarette users use flavored products.

“There are tobacco ads everywhere in our community, and they make it look like candy and all colorful. Our youth don’t always know that it’s a life sentence they’re jumping into. It’s that addictive,” said Community Coalition member Maria Rutledge who has been part of CoCo’s campaign from the very beginning. “All of these predatory businesses are here to make sure we get addicted so they can make money off our suffering and pain. The menthol is designed for our children to get addicted, so they don’t have a future.”

Los Angeles joins more than 100 cities and counties across California that have cracked down on flavored tobacco products. California acted in 2020 to end the sale of flavored tobacco products, but the law is on hold because of a tobacco industry effort to overturn it through a November 2022 referendum.

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