**NAACP, Electeds, Advocates & Clergy: "Protect Black Lives, Ban Flavored Tobacco" ALBANY, NY (03/08/2023)** (readMedia)—

Led by NYS NAACP Chair Hazel Dukes and Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte on International Women's Day, Tobacco Kills NY – a diverse, statewide campaign of civil rights and health advocates, including the NAACP, faith-leaders, public health groups, and others – rallied at the State Capitol in support of Governor Hochul's historic proposal to ban the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes.

**[VIDEO HERE.](https://www.facebook.com/acscanofny%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)**

Last week, the coalition launched ads, some of which can be found here, that began to air statewide during the month of March, highlighting how menthol cigarettes are harder to quit and more addictive than regular tobacco, as well as how Big Tobacco targets communities of color and kids to hook lifelong customers.

Last week, **[a new poll out from Siena College](https://scri.siena.edu/2023/02/27/hochul-favorability-biden-favorability-best-since-october-2021-best-ever-job-approval/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)** showed a significant majority of New Yorkers surveyed were in favor of the proposed ban on menthol-flavored tobacco products, with 57% in favor versus 35% against. New Yorkers are also in favor of a one-dollar tax increase on cigarettes, with only a third of respondents against the measure, according to the poll.

New York State made great strides to prevent youth tobacco use by restricting the sale of flavored e-cigarettes in 2020–but the new regulations still allowed other dangerous flavored tobacco products known to increase addiction to continue to be sold. Menthol cigarettes, which are much easier to smoke and more addictive than regular tobacco, are still available on shelves and the number one way Big Tobacco hooks young smokers and keeps Black New Yorkers addicted.

For generations, Big Tobacco has aggressively marketed flavored tobacco products to underage users and communities of color, creating disproportionately negative health outcomes for African-Americans in particular. In New York State, menthol cigarettes are used by over half of all adult smokers (52%). 86% of Black smokers and 72% of Hispanic smokers smoke menthols. **[Now 62% of Americans support a ban on menthol, including two-thirds of Black Americans](https://www.statnews.com/2023/02/02/banning-tobacco-products/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)**. Half of young people (ages 12-17) who had ever tried smoking start with menthol cigarettes. In 2021, 41.1% of high school smokers reported using menthol cigarettes.

Neither the City nor the State legislation will lead to the arrest or incarceration of more Black and Brown New Yorkers. Both bills contain strong language ensuring that only brick-and-mortar retailers are the focus of any enforcement actions, not individuals. Individual purchase, use, and possession of products covered by the law is explicitly exempted from any enforcement activity or citation under the policy. Police are not and will not be tasked with enforcing flavored tobacco restrictions - and assertions to the contrary are false.

"As family physicians, everyday we see the disease and suffering caused by tobacco use. Gov. Kathy Hochul is absolutely right to call for New York state to end the sale of flavored tobacco products and increase the state's cigarette tax by $1.We strongly support its enactment to reduce the uptake of these deadly and highly addictive tobacco products by children, whom the tobacco industry aggressively targets as "replacement smokers,"**said Andrew Symons, MD, NYSAFP President.**

"The negative effects of smoking and the addictive nature of nicotine are public health concerns. Any opportunity to discourage a New Yorker from taking up the habit of tobacco use is a positive step." **Jeanine Santelli, PhD, RN, AGPCNP-BC, FAAN, Executive Director American Nurse Association -New York.**

"Tobacco is still the leading preventable cause of death in New Yorkers. It is time to take additional steps to increase the cigarette tax, ban flavored tobacco products, and increase support for the state's Tobacco Control Program, all of which will help more people quit smoking and prevent young people from starting," **said New York State Public Health Association advocacy lead, Dr. Gus Birkhead.**

"My father passed from lung cancer due to menthol cigarette smoking, just like thousands of parents that year, and decades later, the deadly cycle continues. Big Tobacco predatorially spreads lies and misinformation to keep profiting off of the death of our communities, including outrageous false claims that these common sense restrictions will lead to criminalization," **said** **NYS Assembly Majority Whip Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn.** "New Yorkers won't be fooled by Big Tobacco anymore, and polls show the tides are turning. They know this ban will not be criminalized and that it will save lives-so they strongly support this legislation to remove flavored tobacco and deadly menthol cigarettes from our stores."

"Big tobacco has long relied on flavored products and advertising gimmicks to hook young people, communities of color and other groups to create new, lifelong customers," **said Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal (D/WF - Manhattan).** "In 2020, I championed New York State's ban on flavored e-cigarettes. Now, it's time to protect public health and extend this ban to all flavored tobacco products, a common-sense measure that already has the support of the majority of New Yorkers. Banning the sale of flavored tobacco products along with an increase to the state's cigarette tax will save lives and help us achieve a tobacco-free generation."

"I strongly support Governor Hochul's proposal to ban sales of flavored tobacco products as well as the one-dollar tax increase on cigarettes. These measures will put an overdue stop to Big Tobacco's long-standing efforts to market these harmful products, particularly to youths of color who became unduly targets of their malicious marketing scheme," **said State Senator Gustavo Rivera.** "As Chair of the Senate Health Committee, I am committed to working with all stakeholders to pass these measures and protect New Yorkers' health from the unquestionable dangers of tobacco use and smoking."

"It is time for state leaders to once and for all get serious about lowering tobacco use rates and, with it, cancer incidence and deaths,"**said Michael Davoli, Senior Government Relations Director of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network.** "If we are to ever end the deadly impact that tobacco has on our kids and our communities, then we must adopt an all-of-the above strategy that starts with removing flavored products like menthol cigarettes from the tobacco industry toolbox."

**State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal said,**"Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. Tobacco companies specifically target youth and communities of color with flavored products, which are highly addictive and worsen a slew of physical and mental health outcomes. By banning the sale of all flavored tobacco products in the executive budget proposal, Governor Hochul is rightly putting public health over profits and building off the important work of the state legislature. I am glad to see the Executive Budget raises the tax on cigarettes and bans flavored tobacco products, policies I have championed with my bill, S2441. I am thankful for the efforts of the NAACP on this issue and look forward to enacting these policies to ensure more lives are saved."

"Tobacco is still the leading preventable cause of death in New Yorkers. It is time to take additional steps to increase the cigarette tax, ban flavored tobacco products, and increase support for the state's Tobacco Control Program, all of which will help more people quit smoking and prevent young people from starting," **said New York State Public Health Association advocacy lead, Dr. Gus Birkhead.**

"Tobacco control advocates and health partners across New York have long recognized the need to act boldly in the face of repeated targeting of youth and communities of color by the tobacco industry. We stand proudly with them today and urge the State legislature to pass a budget that protects New Yorkers from tobacco related death and disease." –**Trevor Summerfield, Director of Advocacy (New York), American Lung Association**

**Sarah Ravenhall, Executive Director of the New York State Association of County Health Officials, said:**"Both state and federal laws for years have prohibited the sale of certain flavored tobacco products that were widely used in non-minority communities-preventing young people from getting hooked and diminishing the catastrophic health impacts of tobacco use in those communities. If we are serious about health equity in New York State, then justice demands we provide the same protection to communities of color. We implore state legislative leaders to act now and pass Governor Hochul's tobacco control measures, including a ban on menthol tobacco products."

"The tobacco industry continues to peddle its favorite brand of flavored poison-menthol cigarettes-hoping to hook yet another generation of children on nicotine and turning them into Big Tobacco's next lifetime customers. Governor Hochul's budget proposals are vital to New York parents working hard every single day to ensure them a safe and healthy future, which every single child deserves. **- Meredith Berkman, Co-Founder, Parents Against Vaping e-cigarettes (PAVe).**

**Supporters of Tobacco Kills**

African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council, Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, American Nurses Association - New York, The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Capital Area, Brooklyn College Cancer Center, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Center for Black Health & Equity, Columbia University Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center, Community Health Care Association of New York State, Community Healthcare Network, Healthy Alliance. Hispanic Federation, Interfaith Public Health Network, March of Dimes, Medical Society of the State of New York, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Mental Health Association in New York, Montefiore Health System, Mount Sinai Tisch Cancer Center, NAACP New York State Conference, New York Chapter American College of Physicians Services, Inc., New York Chapter of the American College of Surgeons, New York Public Interest Research Group, New York School-Based Health Alliances, NYS Academy of Family Physicians, NYS American Academy of Pediatrics, Chapters 1, 2, & 3, .NYS Association for Rural Health, NYS Association of County Health Officials, New York State Conference of Blue Cross, NYS Association of County Health Officials, New York State Conference of Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans (NYSCOP), NYS Council of Health-system Pharmacists, NYS Council of School Superintendents, The NYS Neurological Society, NYS PTA, NYS Public Health Association, NYS School Boards Association, NYS Society of Anesthesiologists, NYS Society of Orthopaedic Surgeons, Inc., The NYS Society of Plastic Surgeons, NYS United Teachers, NYU Langone, Parents Against Vaping E-Cigarettes, Pharmacists Society of the State of New York, Public Health Solutions, School Administrators Association of New York State, St. Peter's Health Partners, VIP Community Services, WNY United Against Drug & Alcohol Abuse, Inc, and Blue Shield Plans (NYSCOP).