
White House Decision Not to Issue Final Menthol Rule Represents Huge Loss for Public Health, Social Justice

Statement from Kathy Crosby, Truth Initiative CEO and President

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 26, 2024) – It is deeply disappointing that the Biden Administration has announced that it is delaying the final rule to remove menthol as a characterizing flavor in cigarettes. As a result, the Administration has lost an opportunity to save lives, protect youth, and stand up for social justice by reducing health disparities. The inaction by the White House to remove menthol from cigarettes is all the more reason for states and localities to take action to implement flavored tobacco product restrictions in their own jurisdictions.

Achieving President Biden’s ambitious Cancer Moonshot goal to cut cancer death rates in half over the next 25 years and significantly reduce health disparities requires bringing all resources to bear. Eliminating menthol cigarettes is of paramount importance to reaching that target, and the Administration’s failure to do so represents a self-inflicted wound that buys into a false narrative pushed by the tobacco industry and ultimately puts politics over public health. A poll conducted by the Washington D.C.-based Mellman Group found that 58% of voters favor a federal menthol removal; among Black voters, 62% support this action. Additionally, a CDC survey found that more than 62% of Americans support ending the sale of menthol products, yet this data is being ignored by the Administration.

The inaction also represents a significant victory for the tobacco industry, whose well-documented exploitative practices have come at the expense of hundreds of thousands of lives. Young people, LGBTQ+ and Black Americans in particular have borne the unjust burden of tobacco-related death and disease due to menthol cigarettes — which are easier to start, more addictive and harder to quit. For decades, the industry has targeted Black Americans, fueling health disparities and damaging countless communities of color.

Further, menthol cigarettes are a gateway product to nicotine addiction that have plagued our nation for far too long, fostering dependence and proving more challenging to quit compared to non-menthol cigarettes. Studies show that youth and young adults are more likely to try a menthol cigarette as their first cigarette. In fact, 40.4% of all middle school and high school students who currently smoke cigarettes reported using menthol cigarettes, according to the 2023 National Youth Tobacco Survey.



The Administration claims that more discussion is necessary. That is simply a smoke-screen: It has been over a decade since the FDA's Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee reviewed research on menthol cigarettes and unequivocally recommended their removal for the betterment of public health. Subsequent studies have only reinforced this conclusion. No more discussion is necessary. The time to act is now, but instead the Administration has taken a pass on protecting public health and saving lives.

About Truth Initiative®

Truth Initiative is a national nonprofit public health organization committed to a future where commercial tobacco and nicotine addiction are a thing of the past. Our mission is to prevent youth and young adult nicotine addiction and empower quitting for all. Through our evidence-based, market-leading cessation EX Program and the nationally recognized **truth**® public education campaign, we are leading the fight against teen and young adult tobacco use as e-cigarettes threaten to put a new generation at risk of nicotine addiction. Our first-of-its-kind text message quit vaping program, This Is Quitting, has enrolled over 720,000 young people across the country, and our youth e-cigarette prevention curriculum, *Vaping: Know the truth*®, is currently implemented in over 9,000 schools nationwide, reaching a total of over one million students thus far. Our rigorous scientific research and policy studies, community and youth engagement programs supporting populations at high risk of using tobacco, and innovation in tobacco dependence treatment continue to contribute to ending one of the most critical public health battles of our time. Based in Washington, D.C., our organization was established and funded through the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement between attorneys general from 46 states, five U.S. territories, and the tobacco industry. To learn more, visit truthinitiative.org.

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