



AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
For science. For action. For health.

January 9, 2024

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals that champions the health of all people and communities, I write to urge your administration to quickly finalize the Food and Drug Administration's proposed rule to prohibit the sale of menthol cigarettes. We fully support FDA's stance on these rules - enforcement aimed specifically at the tobacco industry - not criminalization or punitive measures against individual consumers. We know that this pro-public health action will play a critical role in reducing death and disease by curtailing young people who may want to experiment with tobacco and prompting many existing smokers to quit.

The tobacco industry has long targeted Black Americans, other communities of color, underserved populations and youth to promote and market menthol-flavored tobacco products. Of all Black smokers, 85% use menthol cigarettes—a grim statistic since many in this community are much less likely than White Americans to be diagnosed with lung cancer at an earlier, more preventable stage.

APHA has long supported regulatory changes to end tobacco use in our nation. The science is clear and overwhelming about the addictiveness and harm of tobacco products. Tobacco use is the leading cause of cancer and cancer deaths in the U.S., according to FDA. Importantly, enabling FDA to end the sale of these cigarettes will also play a critical role in our collective goal of achieving health equity and achieving the goal of reducing cancer deaths under your Cancer Moonshot initiative. In light of the overwhelming evidence of the harm done by menthol, FDA repeatedly stated their intent to issue a final rule on menthol-flavored tobacco products by the end of 2023. Further delay runs counter to the scientific evidence that shows that this policy will save hundreds of thousands of lives – including the lives of many of the 45,000 Black Americans who die each year from tobacco-related illnesses.

We strongly urge you to oppose any further delay in finalizing this critical public health rule and we stand ready to work with you and the rest of your administration to ensure the public understands the importance of the rule and the positive impact it will have on the nation's health.

Thank you again for your ongoing support for public health. Please let me know if I can be of assistance to you on this important rule or any additional efforts to improve and protect the health of the nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director