



March 27, 2023

Congresswoman Gwen Moore  
250 East Wisconsin, Suite 950  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Congresswoman Gwen Moore:

Thank you for your continued support of the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) proposals to prohibit the sale of menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars. Although smoking is at an all-time low, tobacco use remains the number one cause of death in Wisconsin, and commercial tobacco\* costs Wisconsin \$4.72 billion in health care and lost productivity.<sup>[i]</sup> Unfortunately, many communities continue to experience high rates of smoking and smoking-caused disease, including people with lower levels of income and education, individuals living in rural areas, Native Americans, people with a behavioral health condition, and the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>[ii]</sup> FDA has the tools to reduce the number of people who die of cancer, heart disease, respiratory disease, and other tobacco-caused diseases. Finalizing their proposals will have a profound impact on reducing youth tobacco use, preventing tobacco-caused disease, and saving lives.

Menthol reduces the harshness of tobacco smoke, which makes it easier for youth to start smoking. Menthol is easier to start and harder to quit because of its soothing and cooling effect, and it is the only cigarette flavor still allowed on the market.<sup>[iii]</sup> Menthol has been targeted toward African Americans for decades. Wisconsin's Black neighborhoods are also exposed to almost twice as much outdoor tobacco advertising compared to white neighborhoods.<sup>[iv]</sup> Exposure to retail marketing is linked to kids starting to use tobacco, and it makes it harder for smokers to quit, as it normalizes tobacco use, triggers impulse purchase, and discourages quit attempts.<sup>[v]</sup> Members of the LGBTQIA2S+ population use menthols at rates of up to 12% higher than those who do not identify as LGBTQIA2S+.<sup>[vi]</sup> Removing these products from the market would reduce the number of youth who become addicted to tobacco, save hundreds of thousands of lives, and advance health equity.

Little cigars come in a variety of fruit and candy flavors. They are often kept in front of the counter near chips and candy, and tobacco products on the sales floor are more likely to be sold to minors than those behind the counter.<sup>[vii]</sup> Flavored little cigars are often much cheaper than cigarettes. They are sold as singles for less than a dollar in Wisconsin's rural and urban counties, making them extremely affordable for teens.<sup>[viii]</sup> We need to protect kids from flavored cigars because cigar smoke is composed of the same toxic and carcinogenic constituents found in cigarette smoke and can cause cancer of the oral cavity, larynx, esophagus, and lungs.<sup>[ix]</sup>

FDA should finalize these proposals quickly. We urge you to discourage any delays and reject any efforts by Congress to restrict the ability of FDA to move forward with these or other efforts to reduce tobacco use. Strong FDA action to reduce tobacco use is critical, as tobacco use continues to claim the lives of nearly half a million Americans every year. It is time to put an end to the tobacco industry's targeted efforts to use flavored products to lure youth into a lifetime of deadly addiction.

Sincerely,

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network  
American Heart Association  
American Lung Association  
Bellin Health  
Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids  
Canaan Baptist Church  
Children's Wisconsin  
Church of God in Christ Auxiliaries in Ministry  
Community Action for Health Living  
Community Advocates Public Policy Institute  
City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance  
Dane County Alliance Against Commercial Tobacco  
Diverse and Resilient  
Drug Free Adams County  
El Bethel Church of God in Christ  
General Baptist State Convention of Wisconsin  
Growing Violets, LLC  
Gundersen Health System  
Healing Waters  
Jesus International Ministries  
Jump at the Sun Consultants, LLC  
KRW Tobacco-Free Coalition  
Leaders of Tomorrow  
Marshfield Clinic Health System  
Matters of the Heart

New Life Miracles Ministries  
Partnership for a Tobacco Free Wisconsin  
Partnership for Prevention  
Prevention and Response Columbia County  
REACH, Calumet County  
SAFE in Juneau County  
Security Health Plan  
South Central Alliance for Tobacco Prevention  
Southwest Alliance for Tobacco Prevention  
SSM Health – Wisconsin  
United Church of Christ  
UW Center for Tobacco Research & Intervention  
UW Health  
UW - Milwaukee Joseph J. Zilber School of Public Health  
UW School of Medicine and Public Health  
Wisconsin African American Tobacco Prevention Network  
Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards  
Wisconsin Asthma Coalition  
Wisconsin Public Health Association  
Wisconsin Tobacco Prevention and Poverty Network  
Youth2Youth 4 Change

\* This letter focuses on commercial tobacco - mass-produced products sold for profit that contain chemical additives. Native Americans have used traditional tobacco in sacred ways for centuries. By focusing tobacco prevention and control on commercial tobacco, we acknowledge and respect sovereign tribal nations' relationship with sacred tobacco.

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<sup>[i]</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. (2022). *The Toll of Tobacco in Wisconsin*. Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

<https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/wisconsin>

<sup>[ii]</sup> WI Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey [BRFSS]. [Report in Preparation]. (2021). WI Tobacco Prevention and Control Program.

<sup>[iii]</sup> American Lung Association. (2022). What is menthol? Retrieved from <https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/smoking-facts/health-effects/what-is-menthol>.

<sup>[iv]</sup> Tobwis. (2022). Menthol Toolkit. Retrieved from <https://tobwis.org/toolkits/menthol-toolkit/>.

<sup>[v]</sup> <sup>6</sup> Wisconsin Department of Health Services. (2018). *Tobacco is Changing: See how menthol damages vulnerable communities*. [PDF file].

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p02040c.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Center for Public Health Systems Science. Point-of-Sale Strategies: A Tobacco Control Guide. St. Louis: Center for Public Health Systems Science, George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis and the Tobacco Control Legal Consortium; 2014

<sup>[vi]</sup> Truth Initiative. (2022). Menthol: Facts, stats, and regulations. Retrieved from [https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/traditional-tobacco-products/menthol-facts-stats-and-regulations?utm\\_source=Truth+Initiative+Mailing+List&utm\\_campaign=098ce0514e-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2022\\_04\\_28\\_04\\_51&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_c91fd8a5c5-098ce0514e-86527704](https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/traditional-tobacco-products/menthol-facts-stats-and-regulations?utm_source=Truth+Initiative+Mailing+List&utm_campaign=098ce0514e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_04_28_04_51&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c91fd8a5c5-098ce0514e-86527704).

<sup>[vii]</sup> Wisconsin Department of Health Services. (2019) *Wisconsin Retail Assessment Project 2017-2019*. Retrieved from

<https://www.tobaccofreewisconsin.org/retail-assessment.html>

<sup>[viii]</sup> Wisconsin Department of Health Services. (2019) *Wisconsin Retail Assessment Project 2017-2019*. Retrieved from

<https://www.tobaccofreewisconsin.org/retail-assessment.html>.

<sup>[ix]</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The Rise of Cigars and Cigar-Smoking Harms. <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/assets/factsheets/0333.pdf>. [Accessed February 16, 2023].