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MAYOR EMANUEL CALLS ON THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION TO TAKE STRONG ACTION AGAINST MENTHOL CIGARETTES

Mayor asks FDA to consider all options to combat menthols up to and including outright ban

As part of his overall campaign to reduce youth smoking, Mayor Rahm Emanuel called on the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to take strong, forceful, and lasting action to reduce the usage of menthol cigarettes among young people.

In a letter to the FDA, Mayor Emanuel discusses the specific risks menthol poses to youth, and asks the agency to consider all options to limit their use, from actions such as increased focus on warning labels to an outright, complete ban of these products.

"Smoking kills people, and menthol cigarettes are, quite simply, a vehicle to attract and addict more smokers," said Mayor Emanuel. "We need to take every action and every step possible to help our children to live long, healthy lives as tobacco-free adults, and eliminating the use of menthol cigarettes is a critical step."

In addition to his request regarding menthol cigarettes, Mayor Emanuel also asked the FDA to assert its authority over other forms of flavored tobacco including cigars, hookah and pipe tobacco, which are currently unregulated and marketed to youth. The letter also calls on the FDA to invest additional funds in education and marketing campaigns and to 'crack down on the trafficking and sale of illegal cigarettes by finally implementing the national track-and-trace system required by the Tobacco Control Act.'

Mayor Emanuel's letter was sent following four Town Hall meetings held across the city, where more than 200 residents and content experts provided testimony and new ways to help reduce menthol use, especially among City youth.

"At our town hall meetings, we heard firsthand stories of how menthol-flavored cigarettes have hurt Chicago's youth for generations," said Chicago Department of Public Health Commissioner Bechara Choucair, M.D. "We are working together to expand our efforts and ensure more youth have the opportunity to be healthy."

Mayor Emanuel was a co-sponsor of the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act while he was a member of Congress, and it was signed into law by President Barack Obama, while Mayor

Emanuel served as White House Chief of Staff. The bill gives the FDA authority to ban flavored cigarettes, as they have been used by tobacco companies to market specifically to youth.

This fall, CDPH will launch a public awareness campaign focused on menthol-flavored cigarette use. These programs are part of Mayor Emanuel's call to action under the City of Chicago's Public Health agenda entitled 'Healthy Chicago.' This is the first-ever comprehensive plan for public health put forth by the City and it continues to serve as a blueprint for a focused approach by CDPH to implement policies and systems changes to transform the health of Chicago.

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