

Member, Board of Supervisors
District 10



City and County of San Francisco

MALIA COHEN
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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

**SUPERVISOR MALIA COHEN INTRODUCES LANDMARK
FLAVORED TOBACCO RESTRICTION ORDINANCE**

San Francisco, CA – Supervisor Malia Cohen today introduced a landmark tobacco control ordinance which will restrict the sale of all flavored tobacco products in the City of San Francisco. This evidence-based legislation prohibits retailers from selling any tobacco product, whether cigarette, smokeless, e-product, or otherwise, that has an added characterizing flavor.

Supervisor Cohen’s legislation is unique in that it is a full restriction on the sale of flavored tobacco, including menthol products. Flavored tobacco is disproportionately marketed to children and young adults, African Americans and LGBTQ people.

“For too long the tobacco industry has gotten a pass while they selectively target vulnerable populations with flavored tobacco products,” said Supervisor Cohen. “Flavored tobacco hooks new smokers and makes them lifelong users. It can be more harmful and more difficult to quit than unflavored tobacco. Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, specifically cancers. This legislation will have a tremendous impact on the disturbing disparities for tobacco-related illnesses, and will reduce the number of new tobacco users that pick up the habit annually.”

Beyond the human suffering associated with tobacco use, the financial cost in San Francisco amounts to \$380 million per year in direct health care expenses and lost productivity.

"We know from research and studies that tobacco related diseases continues to be the number one cause of preventable deaths, especially among low income and minority communities," says Mayor Ed Lee. "We must do everything in our power to educate San Franciscans about the negative effects of tobacco and to protect the health, safety and welfare of our citizens. I applaud Supervisor Cohen for leading on this effort."

“This is the largest and best step to-date to reign in the predatory marketing of menthol and all flavored tobacco products. It’s about time!” said Dr. Phil Gardiner from the University of California Office of the President. “Big Tobacco’s strategy of using menthol is to ease the harshness of tobacco consumption while alluding to menthol cigarettes as ‘healthier’ options. They target low income communities and others, adding to their duplicity all in the name of making billions of dollars in profits at the expense of human lives.”

“45,000 African Americans die annually from tobacco related diseases - more than police-involved shootings, homicides, AIDS, car accidents, diabetes; and all other preventable causes of death combined,” said Dr. Valerie Yerger of UCSF. “Why do over 80% of Black smokers smoke mentholated tobacco products? Since the Civil Rights Era, Big Tobacco companies have perniciously targeted the African American Community with mentholated tobacco products.”

“We salute the vision and courage of Supervisor Malia Cohen,” said Carol McGruder of the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council. “This proposed legislation puts the health and lives of our children before the tobacco industry profits. The African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council is calling for the greater tobacco control community to work strategically to restrict the sale of menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products. All communities should be healthy and prosperous.”

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