

Joint Statement Urging the Biden Administration to Immediately Issue Final Rules Prohibiting Menthol Cigarettes and Flavored Cigars

Our organizations are united in our strong support for the FDA's proposed rules to prohibit menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars, and we call on the Biden Administration to issue the final rules this month, the deadline the Administration set in December when it issued the Fall 2023 Unified Agenda of regulatory actions. These rules are supported by overwhelming scientific evidence, they will have enormous benefits for our nation's health, and they are critical to achieving top priorities of the Biden Administration, especially the President's Cancer Moonshot and the Administration's commitment to promoting health equity.

We were deeply disappointed in December when the Administration delayed issuing these long-overdue rules. As tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, killing nearly half a million Americans every year, any further delay in issuing the final rules will result in needless disease, suffering and deaths. The Administration must stand up to the tobacco industry and act now to save lives.

These rules will have a profound impact on our nation's health. Once implemented, they will:

- **Protect America's kids from tobacco addiction.** Menthol cigarettes are a "starter product" for youth because menthol cools and numbs the throat, masking the harshness of tobacco smoke. Half of all youth who have ever tried smoking started with menthol cigarettes. Flavored cigars, sold in hundreds of kid-friendly flavors, also attract kids and endanger their health.
- **Advance the President's Cancer Moonshot.** As the Administration has stated, smoking causes 30% of all cancer deaths in the U.S. and is "the biggest single driver of cancer deaths in this country." These rules represent some of the most impactful actions the Administration can take to save lives from cancer, and research shows that prohibiting menthol cigarettes would help close the disparity in lung cancer death rates between Black Americans and other racial groups sooner than it otherwise would have.
- **Promote health equity.** These rules will especially improve the health of Black and other communities that have long been targeted by the tobacco industry with predatory marketing for these products. The industry has particularly targeted the Black community, causing devastating and disproportionate harm to the health of Black Americans. Other populations disproportionately impacted by menthol cigarettes include Hispanic and Asian Americans, the LBGTQ+ community, women, people with limited incomes, and people with mental health conditions.
- **Save hundreds of thousands of lives.** Researchers estimate that prohibiting menthol cigarettes will save up to 654,000 lives within 40 years, including 255,000 Black lives.

Given these enormous benefits, the Biden Administration has an obligation to issue the final rules prohibiting menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars without further delay. We urge President Biden and his Administration to seize this historic opportunity to improve our nation's health, promote health equity and save lives from cancer and other tobacco-related diseases. Delays cost lives, and inaction is unacceptable.