

MINNESOTA MENTHOL COALITION

Working to Improve Commercial Tobacco Cessation Approaches and Outcomes for Black Minnesotans

- We recognize that ending the sale of flavored commercial tobacco, which includes menthol cigarettes, will have an outsized impact on Black Minnesotans who smoke. Because of decades of tobacco industry targeting, Black smokers use menthols at a much higher rate than smokers in the general population and consequently suffer disproportionately from tobacco-related death and disease.
- We know that a comprehensive policy approach must include culturally-appropriate, well-funded, well-publicized cessation resources.
- We acknowledge that current cessation resources are not perceived as culturally-relevant by many Black Minnesotans who smoke. Recent focus group findings demonstrate that cessation support should happen in a group setting facilitated by trusted, community-based providers. While quit lines and Nicotine Replacement Therapy (e.g. nicotine gum) are useful tools for, they should not be considered the only resource for Black Minnesotans looking to quit smoking.



The Menthol Coalition is a group of public health organizations, faith communities, health care leaders and others that serve the Black community. We are working to change current systems and create new systems for culturally-competent, easily accessible commercial tobacco cessation for Black Minnesotans who smoke.

ABOUT MENTHOL

- Menthol flavoring makes smoking **easier to start** and **harder to quit**.
- Tobacco companies add menthol to their products to cool the throat and make the products taste better.
- Menthol products are perceived to be “safer” even though they have the same health effects as non-menthol cigarettes.

BIG TOBACCO TARGETS BLACK MINNESOTANS

- In the 1980s, brands like Salem and Newport gave away free menthol cigarettes from vans in Black neighborhoods. These brands still heavily advertise menthol products in Black neighborhoods.
- Tobacco companies advertise menthol products in Black magazines, sponsor community events, and hire Black pop culture icons and influencers to target Black customers.
- The industry makes investments in organizations and institutions led by and/or serving the African American community to gain influence. Some examples include HBCUs, the National Urban League, and the Congressional Black Caucus.

“Young blacks have found their thing, and it’s menthol.”

- 1974 Philip Morris report

MENTHOL IS A HEALTH EQUITY ISSUE

- In the US, 85% of Black people who smoke use menthols, compared to 29% of white smokers. This is a direct result of industry targeting.
- Because African Americans are more likely to start and continue smoking menthol cigarettes, they bear a disproportionate burden of tobacco-related diseases and death.
- Menthol cigarettes are the only flavored cigarette still on the market.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Ending the sale of menthol cigarettes in Minnesota has the potential to help a quarter of people who smoke menthols quit. We urge the legislature to pass the bill to end the sale of all flavored commercial tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes, flavored cigars, e-cigarettes, hookah, and smokeless tobacco in Minnesota this session (SF2123/HF2177).

**BEAUTIFUL LIE
UGLY TRUTH**

ABOUT FLAVORED TOBACCO

www.beautifullieuglytruth.org

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Citations available at
www.beautifullieuglytruth.org