



8403 Colesville Road, Suite 820  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910  
(202) 347-1895 Fax (202) 347-0722  
[www.NMANet.org](http://www.NMANet.org)

Office of the President

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **NMA Applauds the Introduction of Legislation to Ban the Sale of All Flavored Tobacco Products, including Menthol Cigarettes and Flavored Cigars**

The National Medical Association strongly supports the *Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act of 2019* legislation introduced today. This would prohibit the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars. We applaud Representative Frank Pallone (D-NJ) for introducing the bill and taking this important step forward.

As the collective voice of African-American physicians, we know that banning menthol cigarettes will save lives in our community. Smoking-related illnesses are the number one cause of death in the African- American community and approximately 45,000 African Americans die each year from smoking-related diseases. Further, more than 85 percent of African-American smokers use menthol cigarettes. According to a 2013 report by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), when compared to non-mentholated cigarette use, the “cooling and anesthetic properties” of mentholated cigarette use increases smoking initiation and the likelihood of becoming addicted in children and adults and decreases success in quitting smoking.

As reported by the Surgeon General in a 1994 report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 90 percent of smokers first started smoking by age 18. Also, as reported by B. K. Ambrose in a 2015 article of The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), a majority of the youth ages 12-17 first tried flavored tobacco products and that flavoring was the leading reason for their tobacco use.

For years the tobacco industry has aggressively promoted menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products in African-American communities. Taking action to ban menthol cigarettes is long overdue and the NMA requests that Congress move swiftly to take up this bill and save lives. To that end, increased funding should be earmarked to increase smoking-cessation initiatives and increased promotion of same in African American communities. Our support of this legislation is for the betterment of the public health.

The National Medical Association is the collective voice of African American physicians and the leading force for parity and justice in medicine. The NMA is the oldest organization of African American professionals in America representing the over 50,000 African American physicians and the patients we serve in the United States and its territories.

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Niva Lubin-Johnson, M.D., FACP  
President

Contact: Michael Peery  
(312) 217-2260  
[lengarmedia@gmail.com](mailto:lengarmedia@gmail.com)