



Kansas City, Missouri Branch
PO Box 301042

Kansas City, Missouri 64130

October 22, 2024

The Honorable Mayor & City Council of Kansas City
414 E. 12th St 22nd Floor,
Kansas City, Missouri 64106

Dear Mayor Lucas and Members of the Kansas City Council,

On behalf of the NAACP – Kansas City Branch, I am writing to you to express our strong support for Ordinance 240897, which calls for a comprehensive ban on all flavored tobacco products. This is not just a matter of public health; it is a matter of racial justice.

Big Tobacco has aggressively targeted minority communities, particularly the African American community, through efforts at the point of sale, branding, and sponsorship to push these products. As a result, among individuals who smoke, nearly 85 percent of African Americans use menthol cigarettes, compared to 47.7 percent of Hispanics, 41.1 percent of Asians, and 30.3 percent of whites.

The tragic consequences of these marketing efforts are evident in the disproportionately high smoking rates and tobacco-related health issues that ravage City Council Districts 3, 4, and 5 - Kansas City's most predominantly African American districts. These communities suffer at the hands of an industry that prioritizes profits over lives, perpetuating addiction and preventable diseases that disproportionately impact Black residents

For over two decades, the NAACP has led the call for a ban on menthol cigarettes and flavored e-cigarettes because we recognize the tobacco industry's long-standing quest for profit at the expense of Black lives. The Association remains committed to fighting for the prioritization of Black Americans' health and well-being, holding our elected officials accountable, and ensuring our community remains informed.

The NAACP supports the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's final rulemaking extending its authority to all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, cigars, hookah tobacco and pipe tobacco, and other electronic nicotine delivery systems, which helps implement the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009 and supports efforts by state and local governments in the United States to restrict the sale of flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes.

The relentless predatory marketing of menthol-flavored cigarettes employed by the tobacco industry has inflicted devastating consequences on Black communities. Our message remains clear – if the City Council cares about Black lives, they will act swiftly to ban menthol-flavored tobacco products. Menthol cigarettes continue to claim the lives of countless Americans and ruin the health of many more. We reject Big Tobacco selling death in our communities because health is integral to the wellbeing of Black communities.

We urge the City Council to adopt Ordinance 240897 in its entirety. The city has an opportunity to lead in protecting its citizens, to stand up to the predatory practices of Big Tobacco, and to address the health inequities that plague Kansas City's Black communities.

We cannot afford to accept anything less than a full ban on all flavored tobacco products. It is time to act boldly, decisively, and in the interest of justice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Ricard", is written over the word "Sincerely,".

Steven E. Ricard

President, NAACP – Kansas City, Missouri Branch