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***Social Justice Groups, Parent Advocates and Public Health Organizations
Kick Off “Flavors Hook Kids NYC” Campaign***

Call on City Leaders to Restrict the Sale of Flavored Tobacco

Nearly 81 Percent of Young Smokers Start with a Flavored Product

NEW YORK, NY – April 17, 2019 – A diverse group of national and local organizations have joined together to kick off the “Flavors Hook Kids NYC” campaign. The campaign will deliver a loud and clear message to New York City through a new website FlavorsHookKidsNYC.org, and radio and print ads that we must protect all New Yorkers from the dangers of flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes and candy-flavored electronic cigarettes.

The campaign is urging the city council to immediately pass legislation that will restrict the sale of menthol cigarettes and all flavored tobacco products, including the more than 15,000 flavors of e-cigarettes, including kid-friendly varieties like cotton candy, gummy bear and crème brûlée. These flavors have contributed to youth use of e-cigarettes becoming an “epidemic” in New York City and across our nation. The name, Flavors Hook Kids NYC, reflects the long-accepted evidence that flavors are one of the most successful ways that the tobacco industry has historically addicted kids to these dangerous products.

Intro 1345-2019, sponsored by Councilmember Fernando Cabrera would close New York City’s flavored tobacco “loophole” by restricting the sale of menthol cigarettes, which have historically been heavily marketed in low income, communities of color. Intro 1362-2019, sponsored by Councilmember Mark Levine, would end the sale of flavored e-cigarettes which are luring kids into using tobacco products.

In 2009, Congress banned flavored cigarettes other than menthol. In the same year, New York City restricted the sale of all flavored tobacco products but exempted menthol, mint and wintergreen flavors. The bills endorsed today would close the menthol, mint and wintergreen loophole and help ensure that kids are not getting hooked on flavored e-cigarettes.

“We’re taking important steps to protect the health of New Yorkers, especially our youth,” said **Fernando Cabrera, New York City Councilmember representing the 14th District in the Bronx**. “My bill, Intro 1345 closes the ‘loophole’ left open in 2009 when we banned the sale of most tobacco flavors that attract youth to smoking. But the 2009 ban omitted menthol, wintergreen and mint flavors that have been heavily marketed by the tobacco industry in poor communities of color. The dangers of these flavors, including a cooling effect that

hides the harshness of smoking and suppressing the cough reflex, make it easier to inhale and encourage deeper inhaling. This results in greater exposure to deadly toxins and higher levels of nicotine addiction, making it harder to quit smoking. These dangers are well documented by the NIH, the Dana Farber Institute and National Jewish Health. Chronic diseases and deaths related to smoking are very high in the Bronx, which has the worst health outcomes of any county in New York state. I'm taking action to stop this decades-long pattern of death and disease that unfairly targets youth and low-income people of color."

"Vaping has reached epidemic levels among teens, with life-long implications for young people who become addicted to nicotine," said **New York City Councilmember Mark Levine representing the 7th District in Manhattan**. "One of the tools the industry has used to draw in teenagers is candy flavors like chocolate mint, blueberry, or cherry crush. These flavored smoking products disproportionately attract younger consumers, which is why New York City long-ago banned flavored tobacco. It's time we did the same for e-cigarettes."

Despite significant progress reducing tobacco use in recent years, nearly a million New Yorkers continue to smoke, and tobacco use remains the number one cause of preventable death in New York City. Tobacco use kills 28,000 New Yorkers and costs the state over \$10.3 billion in health care bills every year.

According to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, more than one out of every six city high school students reported using an e-cigarette at least once in the past month. More troubling, a recent Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health analysis found that from 2013 to 2016, youth ages 12-15 who used e-cigarettes were more than four times more likely to try combustible cigarettes and nearly three times more likely to report current cigarette use than those youth who had not used e-cigarettes. Youth e-cigarette use is harmful because it poses risks to adolescents' brains and leads to an increased chance of adolescents trying combustible cigarettes.

"New York City has come a long way in the fight against Big Tobacco, but there is still much work to do. The next, most effective step to continue our progress is to restrict the sale of menthol and other flavored tobacco products and to ban the sale of flavored e-cigarettes," said **Dr. Herminia Palacio, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services**. "We cannot afford to lose ground on this fight. I'd like to thank everyone involved in the Flavors Hook Kids NYC campaign for their advocacy and commitment to protecting the health of New Yorkers. I commend Council Members Levine and Cabrera for their action and urge the Council to pass these pieces of legislation."

"Flavors in tobacco products and e-cigarettes can hook youth on nicotine," said **Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot**. "Big Tobacco designed menthol cigarettes as a starter product for youth, and spent decades targeting communities of color with menthol marketing. Now, e-cigarette companies offer thousands of flavors, including mint, menthol, candy and fruit, which all appeal to kids. I strongly encourage the New York City Council to pass this important legislation to protect future generations and communities of color from nicotine addiction and Big Tobacco's deadly grip."

The tobacco industry has a long history of using flavors to mask the harshness of their products, making them more appealing to new users and particularly our youth. Most concerning, menthol flavoring can cool the lining of the throat, resulting in more smoking initiation and stronger addiction. And nearly two-thirds of NYC kids who smoke now report that they started with menthol or another flavored tobacco.

In New York City, menthol tobacco is consumed by 85 percent of Black adults who smoke and 64 percent of Latino adults who smoke, and most of these smokers started as kids. These rates contrast with the only 22 percent of white adults who smoke menthols. This disparity has resulted from generations of predatory discrimination by tobacco companies as they marketed their menthol products to these communities, compounded by the lack of action by local, state and federal governments.

"The ban on menthol cigarettes is needed because more than 80 percent of black smokers use menthol cigarettes," said **Lorraine Braithwaite-Harte, Health Chairman of the NAACP New York State**

Conference. “For decades, the tobacco industry has intentionally and successfully marketed menthol cigarettes to African-Americans – and particularly African-American youth and women. The net result is our community suffers from tobacco-related diseases at rates far above what should be acceptable.”

“We formed Parents Against Vaping E-Cigarettes less than a year ago when we realized the extent of the youth vaping epidemic raging through our city, our state, and across the country,” said **Meredith Berkman, Co-founder of Parents Against Vaping E-cigarettes (PAVE)**. “We are literally in a race against time-if we don’t act soon to ban the flavors of e-cigarettes like JUUL that are hooking our kids, we risk having our kids become Generation Nicotine. We are grateful to City Council members Mark Levine and Fernando Cabrera for joining together to keep all flavored tobacco products away from all of New York City’s kids.”

The Flavors Hook Kids campaign is encouraging all New Yorkers to contact their City Councilmembers and for the City Council to act on this package of bills before more kids can be hooked by flavored tobacco and electronic cigarettes.

“No single flavor contributes more to the death and disease caused by tobacco use than menthol, and for decades the tobacco industry has made millions by aggressively marketing this particular flavor to people that look just like me,” said **Kyla Osborne-Browne, NYC Teen, student at Urban Assembly School of Green Careers**.

“As a kid, I rely on adults like those in the City Council to keep flavored tobacco products away from young people like my friends and me,” said **Yael Mintz, Age 11**.

“We are at a critical juncture in our nation’s public health history,” said **Matthew L. Myers, President of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids**. “Together, Councilmember Levine’s and Cabrera’s bills will have an enormous impact on the effort to reduce the number of people who die from tobacco use, significantly reduce the number of young people who become addicted and dramatically reduce the death toll of tobacco on New York City’s African-American population.”

“The steps New York City has taken on tobacco in the last two decades has resulted in a significant decline in use among adults,” said **New York City Councilmember Carlina Rivera representing the 2nd District in Manhattan**. “But we must push forward with new initiatives that curb the allure of flavored cigarettes and e-cigarettes, especially to discourage further upticks in use among teens as those experienced in recent years. I am happy to support my colleagues’ bills as we work to end this public health crisis once and for all.”

“It’s time we put an end to Big Tobacco’s dangerous, aggressive marketing of flavored products to kids and people of color in New York City,” said **Lisa Lacasse, President of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network**. “This package of legislation would help prevent young people from developing a lifelong addiction to nicotine, address the disparate rates of cancer incidence in communities of color and save lives. ACS CAN applauds Councilmembers Cabrera and Levine for their leadership in the fight against cancer and for standing up for the health of all New Yorkers.”

“We can protect our kids and future generations from the harmful and at times deadly effects of tobacco by preventing the substance’s use in the first place,” said **New York City Council Member Antonio Reynoso representing the 34th District in Brooklyn and Queens**. “We know that in an overwhelming majority of cases, kids are first introduced to tobacco through flavored products specifically. Flavored tobacco products make the substance more attractive to younger generations and can serve as an entryway towards a long-term or lifetime addiction. I am grateful that my City Council colleagues have taken legislative action to ban the use of these predatory products, and I am proud to support these pieces of legislation.”

“Flavored tobacco products – including flavored e-cigarettes – are reversing decades of progress in reducing tobacco use among youth and worsening the persistent disparities regarding addiction among communities of color,” said **Nancy Brown, CEO of the American Heart Association**. “Elected officials have a responsibility to counter this mounting threat with effective policies to lower usage rates and keep these flavored products out of the hands of our children. The legislation proposed by Council Members Levine and Cabrera will help to

reduce the appeal of tobacco and e-cigarettes among these communities and lower the incidence of tobacco-caused disease and death.”

“New York City’s youth, poor communities and marginalized groups are routinely bombarded with deliberate marketing for flavored cigarettes and e-cigarettes,” said New York City **Councilmember Adrienne Adams representing the 28th District in Queens**. “The tobacco industry has a long history of using flavors to mask the harshness of their products, making them more appealing to new users. They make it look and smell exactly like candy but it’s a deadly addiction. I applaud Council Members Cabrera and Levine for this important legislation that will curb this public health issue. Together these bills will significantly reduce the number of young people that become addicted and have an enormous impact on the number of people who die from tobacco use.”

“It is no secret that the tobacco industry has for years employed predatory and aggressive marketing campaigns to target marginalized populations, ensuring a constant supply of customers,” said **Deidre Sully, Director of Public Health Solution’s NYC Smoke-Free**. “Flavor additives in tobacco products have always been an important tactic and menthol products have been the flavor that has had the most devastating impact on the African American community – proving that the tobacco’s only interest is profit.”

“With flavors like cotton candy, gummy bear, and crème brûlée now among the 15,000 options available for e-cigarettes, it is time to be honest about the kind of deceptive practices manufacturers are using to market addictive tobacco products to our kids,” said New York City **Councilmember Margaret S. Chin representing the 1st District in Manhattan**. “That is why I am joining my fellow Council Members Levine and Cabrera on legislation to bring a fundamental level of accountability and responsibility to this industry by ending the sale of flavored e-cigarettes and relegating the sale of menthol, mint and wintergreen tobacco products to adult-only tobacco retailers far from NYC’s kids.”

“The ‘cool refreshing taste of menthol’ heralded by the tobacco industry is just a guise; ultimately, menthol allows the poisons in cigarettes and cigarillos to ‘go down into the body’ more easily,” said **Dr. Phillip Gardiner, Co-Chair of the African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council**. “Moreover, 85% African American adult smokers and 94% of Black youth who smoke are using menthol products.”

“The FDA reports that flavored cigarettes threaten to derail the significant progress we’ve made in reducing youth tobacco use, and despite federal restrictions, use of flavored e-cigarettes by middle and high school students has soared,” said **New York City Councilmember Helen Rosenthal representing District 6 in Manhattan**. “It’s urgent that we act now to restrict access to these harmful products which are especially attractive to minors. I am very pleased to support bills banning both electronic and standard flavored cigarettes, and thank my Council colleagues for their leadership on this issue.”

“We strongly believe the FDA needs to use its authority to protect youth from a lifetime of tobacco addiction by ending the sales of all flavored tobacco products. However, since FDA has failed to act, we urge New York City and other states and local municipalities to act to protect kids from all flavored tobacco products, including e-cigarettes. The science is clear: mint, menthol, candy and fruit-flavored products attract youth to e-cigarettes, cigars and other tobacco products and should not be sold,” said **American Lung Association President and CEO Harold Wimmer**.

“Flavored cigarettes and e-cigarettes are a leading factor of tobacco use for kids,” said **New York City Councilmember Vanessa Gibson, representing the 16th District in the Bronx**. “When tobacco products are advertised and sold with different flavors, it is meant to capture a younger audience who are susceptible to product dependence the earlier they begin. Today we are helping to stop these predatory strategies at the source, and I am proud to join my colleagues in restricting the sale of flavored cigarettes and e-cigarettes.”

“Menthol is a sinister flavor that mask the harshness of cigarettes and serves as a ‘starter product’ for youth,” said **Delmonte Jefferson, Executive Director of the NAATPN, Inc**. “Restricting the sale of mentholated tobacco products is an important step to protecting young people and communities of color.”

“Heart disease is the top killer for all Americans, and the risk is even higher for African-Americans,” stated **Icilma V. Fergus, MD, FACC, Past President of the Association of Black Cardiologists**. “African-Americans can improve their odds at preventing cardiovascular disease by not smoking. Physicians can’t win this fight alone, however. City Council needs to help us end the predatory practices of the tobacco industry on young people who disproportionately use menthol-flavored products — a gateway to a life-long smoking addiction and heart disease.”

“As a mom raising six kids in Brownsville, I’m worried about flavored tobacco appealing to my kids,” said **Rachel Rivera, member leader, New York Communities for Change**. “Big tobacco companies are getting rich at the expense of the lives and health of our black and Latino kids. We’re already getting priced out of our neighborhoods, we don’t need more to worry about. The City Council needs to pass strong legislation to protect our kids.”

“Year after year, data collected by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene have shown extremely high smoking rates among Asians in New York City, particularly among Asian men,” said **Jane Eng, President and CEO of the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center**. “We support the Flavors Hook Kids Campaign because we must do everything in our power to ensure that future generations do not become addicted to smoking through e-cigarettes or any other form of flavored tobacco.”

Organizations who have endorsed the Flavors Hook Kids NYC campaign as of today’s announcement include:

- African American Tobacco Control Leadership Council
- American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
- American Heart Association
- American Lung Association
- Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health
- Asian Americans for Equality
- Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
- Charles B. Wang Community Health Center
- Chinese American Medical Society
- Community Healthcare Network
- Korean Community Services
- NAACP
- National African American Tobacco Prevention Network
- Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights
- NY Communities for Change
- NYU Langone Health
- Parents Against Vaping Electronic Cigarettes
- Public Health Solution’s NYC Smoke-Free

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