



PRESS RELEASE

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Urgent Alert: Flavored Tobacco Hooks Hispanic Youth into Nicotine's Grip

Menthol Changes Brain Structure and Increases Dependence on Tobacco

In the face of White House delay on proposed rules to prohibit menthol cigarettes, National Alliance for Hispanic Health calls on state and local leaders to take action in four policy areas.

Washington DC — In a groundbreaking report titled "State and Local Policies to Reduce Flavored Tobacco Use: Reversing the Tobacco Tipping Point Among Hispanic Youth," a comprehensive analysis reveals the alarming increase in nicotine addiction among Hispanic youth due to the consumption of menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco and nicotine products, including e-cigarettes. The report was released by the National Alliance for Hispanic Health (the Alliance).

"For decades, the tobacco industry has used menthol and flavored products to deliberately hook and addict Hispanic and other targeted communities in a callous campaign to increase profit. The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) can stop it now. Sitting at OMB are proposed rules from the FDA, that have been decades in the making, to ban menthol in cigarettes and flavors in cigars," said Jane L. Delgado, PhD, MS, President and CEO of the Alliance. In the absence of White House action on menthol, the Alliance issued a report detailing the risk to Hispanic communities of menthol in tobacco and its role in rates of use among Hispanic youth, a tobacco tipping point.

The Issue at Hand

Recent studies, including brain mapping research, have evidenced that the addition of menthol in tobacco products significantly boosts the number of nicotinic receptors in the brain, contributing to higher addiction rates. Among 11-14 years olds, data shows that 6.6% of Hispanic students are currently using e-cigarettes, surpassing the 4.6% rate among other racial and ethnic groups. Moreover, the introduction of e-cigarettes to the market has led to a sharp increase in tobacco use among Hispanic youth, with one in ten high school students reporting current use of e-cigarettes. This trend is particularly concerning given that up until now, Hispanic adults have been the community less likely to smoke.

Proposed Solutions

The report proposes several key strategies to combat this issue:

1. **Non-Punitive Smoke-Free School Policies:** Implementing effective smoke-free policies within schools to educate students about the dangers of vaping and provide support for those looking to quit.
2. **Buffer Zones Around Youth-Sensitive Areas:** Establishing areas around schools and other youth-centric locations where the sale of flavored tobacco products is strictly prohibited to reduce exposure and accessibility.

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3. **Point of Sale Licensing and Restrictions:** Encouraging local governments to adopt tobacco retailer licensing ordinances that restrict the sale of flavored tobacco products based on compliance with specific requirements.
4. **Comprehensive Ban on Flavored Products:** Advocating for the adoption of comprehensive flavor policies that outlaw the sale of all flavored tobacco products, without exceptions, within local jurisdictions. Successful implementations of such policies in San Francisco, CA; Portland, ME; and Multnomah County, OR serve as exemplars for other regions to follow.

Call to Action

This report serves as a crucial call to action for policymakers, educators, and community leaders to unite in the fight against the flavored tobacco epidemic plaguing Hispanic youth. By adopting these strategic policies, we can protect our young people from the grip of nicotine addiction and ensure a healthier, smoke-free future for all.

The full report and an infographic focused on the four key policy actions state and local policymakers can take is available at: <https://www.healthyamericas.org/tobacco-resources>.

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About the National Alliance for Hispanic Health (The Alliance)

The Alliance is the nation's foremost science-based source of information and trusted advocate for the health of Hispanics in the United States with a mission to achieve the best health for all. For more information visit us at www.healthyamericas.org

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