

# Press Statement

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B-roll and graphics [here](#)



## Statement of Carol Kelly, campaign coordinator

In response to [today's announcement](#) that the FDA will prohibit the sale of menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars

(AUGUSTA) We strongly support the FDA's decision to prohibit the sale of menthol cigarettes and all flavored cigars. We urge them to move swiftly in doing so. But let's put our expectations in perspective. FDA action will take years, and flavored tobacco products are hooking our kids right now. Maine lawmakers can and must take immediate action on menthol cigarettes and other flavored products by passing [LD 1550, An Act to End the Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products](#).

Congress gave the FDA authority over tobacco products in 2009, including the authority to require large warning labels. The FDA announced their intention to require such labels in 2011. Ten years later, we are still waiting. An FDA decision is not the same as FDA action.

Maine kids can't wait 10 years for these deadly products to be removed from store shelves. States must act now and Maine is poised to do so with LD 1550. We cannot put another generation of Maine kids in harm's way by leaving menthol, mint, and candy flavored tobacco on the market.

There are now over 15,000 flavored tobacco products on the market and menthol cigarettes are by far the most dangerous. Menthol numbs the throat and masks the harsh taste of tobacco, making it easier to inhale, and inhale more deeply. People who smoke menthol also show greater signs of nicotine addiction and are less likely to successfully quit smoking than other smokers.

The harm from menthol flavored tobacco is all around us, spanning generations. For decades the tobacco industry has targeted people with lower incomes, African Americans, Native Americans, and LGBTQ youth and young adults with cheaper pricing and predatory advertising of flavored products, particularly menthol.

Today, half of all current high school smokers use menthol cigarettes, while more than 8 out of 10 African American adults who smoke use menthol cigarettes. It's no accident that Black Americans die at higher rates than any other racial or ethnic group in the U.S. from tobacco-related diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and stroke.

Many of us have mothers or grandmothers who started smoking because menthol was advertised as "light", "mild", and "smooth". Believing menthol was a safer tobacco product, many have now paid the price with a lifetime of nicotine addiction, poor health, and too often, premature death.

This is about justice and equity and taking long overdue action on the health disparities created and perpetuated by the tobacco industry. Flavors aren't for adults - flavors hook kids. Youth and young adults are much more susceptible to nicotine addiction. If you do not start using tobacco by age 26, you are unlikely to ever do so. Four out of five kids who have used tobacco started with a flavored product.

The FDA's decision is long overdue. But let's not get lulled into a false sense of security that the problem of menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco is now solved. Action is needed now to protect kids and save lives. We call on the

Maine Legislature and Governor Mills to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products and give this generation of Maine kids a fair shot at a healthy, productive future, free from tobacco addiction.

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- *More information about the Flavors Hook Kids campaign can be found at [www.flavorshookkidsmaine.org](http://www.flavorshookkidsmaine.org).*
- *FDA announcement: <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-commits-evidence-based-actions-aimed-saving-lives-and-preventing-future-generations-smokers>*
- *B-roll and graphics [here](#)*