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Big Cities Health Coalition Thanks FDA for Further Restricting Flavored E-Cigarettes and Taking Important Step to Restrict Menthol in Traditional Tobacco Products

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Big Cities Health Coalition (BCHC) thanked the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today for acting to prevent e-cigarette use among American youth and committing to further restrict menthol in traditional tobacco products. The agency and public health advocates have labeled the surge in teen vaping an “epidemic.”

With new data from the 2018 National Youth Tobacco Survey showing huge increase in youth e-cigarette use – a more than 75% increase among high schoolers and nearly a 50% increase among middle schoolers – FDA was compelled to act. Those on the front lines of public health in communities have, of course, seen this as well, and big city health officials have acted to limit youth access to not only these products, but also traditional, particularly flavored, tobacco products, in those jurisdictions where they are able.

The Big Cities Health Coalition is a forum for the leaders of America’s largest metropolitan health departments to exchange strategies and jointly address issues to promote and protect the health and safety of their residents. Collectively, BCHC member jurisdictions directly impact more than 55 million people, or one in six Americans.

“FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb got it right when he called e-cigarette use among youth an ‘epidemic’,” said Chrissie Juliano, Director of the Big Cities Health Coalition. “And their action today is a step in the right direction. Most drug stores and gas station retailers will no longer be allowed to sell flavored e-cigarettes and additional restrictions regarding online sales should also help to stem the tide. This is a good start, but opportunities remain. These flavors are still available for sale on the internet to those over the age of 18, and brick-and-mortar specialty retailers will continue to sell highly addictive, traditionally flavored e-cigarettes to those ‘of age.’ Further, menthol and mint vaping products will also still be available.

“Importantly, and not to be overlooked, FDA also announced today that they will further address flavors in traditional tobacco products, enacting a menthol ban in cigarettes and cigars. This closes a major regulatory loophole in the Tobacco Control Act and is long overdue. Menthol products have been shown to target minority communities and lead to initiation and addiction.

“For years, big city health officials have acted to protect kids from emerging nicotine and traditional tobacco products with innovative policies like Tobacco 21 and comprehensive flavor restrictions. Until the FDA exercises its full authority, cities will keep working to protect their communities – and youth in particular – from tobacco initiation and addiction. We will also continue to push for strong federal action on tobacco products regulation.”
About the Big Cities Health Coalition
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