



Black Leadership Advisory Council statement on Protect MI Kids legislation

The Michigan Black Leadership Advisory Council has released the following statement in support of the Protect MI Kids comprehensive legislative package to reduce tobacco use in Michigan:

“Each year, 45,000 Black Americans die from smoking-related illnesses. We believe the Protect MI Kids legislative package is the best hope to prevent Michigan youth from smoking; incentivize current smokers to quit; empower local communities to make decisions about tobacco regulation in retail outlets and end the practice of criminalizing tobacco use for young people. The bills would:

- End the sale of flavored tobacco products, including flavored e-cigarettes and menthol-flavored cigarettes. (SB 649 and SB 650, John Cherry (D-Flint))
- Boost the state’s efforts to enforce laws prohibiting the tobacco sales to minors by requiring tobacco retailers to be licensed. Michigan is one of only 10 states that do not require tobacco retailers to be licensed. (SB 651 and SB 652, Sam Singh (D-East Lansing))
- Tax cigarettes and vaping products containing nicotine for the first time and increase tobacco taxes with proceeds used to reduce tobacco use among youth. A recent survey found that 63% of voters support increasing the state tobacco tax by \$1.50 with the money used to reduce tobacco use, particularly among children. (SB 648 , Stephanie Chang (D-Detroit))
- Allow local counties and cities to enact tougher restrictions on tobacco sales within their own community. (SB 647, Sue Shink (D-Northfield Township))
- Repeal ineffective penalties that punish kids for tobacco purchase, use and possession. Nearly 70% of survey respondents support removing criminal penalties for those under 21 who possess, purchase or use tobacco (SB 654, Paul Wojno (D-Warren) and SB 653, Mary Cavanaugh (D-Redford Township))

The tobacco industry has aggressively marketed menthol-flavored products to the Black community since the 1950s. Today, 85% of Black smokers use menthol-flavored tobacco products, leading to catastrophic health outcomes. According to the Centers for Disease Control, Black people are more likely to die from smoking-related diseases like heart disease and diabetes than Hispanic and white Americans. It has been estimated that banning menthol flavoring in tobacco products could lead 923,000 Americans to stop smoking.

The Keep MI Kids Tobacco Free Alliance is a coalition of more than 120 public health, community organizations, school groups and other community groups advocating for stronger tobacco policy and prevention in Michigan. BLAC members will work with the Alliance and legislators who have introduced the bills of the Protect MI Children package to raise awareness about the bills' potential to reduce tobacco use and improve health outcomes among Black Michiganders. Learn more about the Alliance at KeepMIKidsTobaccoFree.com.”

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