



January 25, 2024

On behalf of The Center for Black Health & Equity, I am writing this letter to the Vermont House Human Services Committee in support of your efforts to eliminate the sale of menthol and flavored tobacco and e-liquids in Vermont. Despite what supporters of the tobacco industry and those who resist this measure would have you think, failure to remove menthol and other flavored tobacco sales in Vermont would uphold systemic racism.

Tobacco use continues to be a pressing issue that disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, particularly those who are Black/African American, thus exacerbating existing health disparities. Protecting communities from the harms of tobacco demonstrates a remarkable commitment to reducing the adverse effects of tobacco on the health and well-being of individuals in vulnerable communities, particularly those who are marginalized and at higher risk. The tobacco industry intentionally targets communities of color, low-income communities and youth in their marketing of menthol and other flavored commercial tobacco products. As a result, these populations carry an exceedingly disproportionate burden of tobacco-related illness and early mortality.

By spreading disinformation that removing menthol and flavored tobacco sales would lead to increased criminalization of Black and other communities, the tobacco industry is exploiting the real issues of police brutality and mass incarceration. Excessive force and systemic racism are problems that must be addressed independently of public health measures, and the truth is that 85% of African Americans smoke menthols and 40,000 African Americans die from tobacco-related cancers each year.

Removing menthol and other flavored tobacco sales is a necessary and overdue step to correcting the damage done by predatory tactics by tobacco companies and protecting the health and lives of Black and other vulnerable communities.



THE CENTER FOR
BLACK HEALTH & EQUITY

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Delmonte Jefferson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Delmonte Jefferson
Executive Director