

November 13, 2019
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
County Administration Building
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors:

I write on behalf of the Healthy Lompoc Coalition, a group of over 50 community stakeholders that is facilitated by the Lompoc Valley Community Healthcare Organization (LVCHO), in support of the proposed policy initiative to establish local laws that regulate the sale and distribution of tobacco products by making them less accessible to children.

The Unincorporated County of Santa Barbara currently has 64 stores that sell tobacco- 6 of which are tobacco-only stores. Of these retailers, 13 are within 1,000 feet of a school, which only increases youth exposure to tobacco marketing. In 2019, 49 of these stores were shopped, and 10% of these stores illegally sold tobacco to a minor. Most times, youth who purchase tobacco products from local stores choose flavored tobacco due to their sweet tastes and appealing names. In 2017 the combined advertising and promotion cost of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco was \$9.36 billion, which is more than \$25 million every day, and more than \$1 million every hour. The total economic cost of smoking is over \$300 billion each year, which includes almost \$170 billion dollars in direct medical care for adults only.

Adopting strong flavored tobacco restrictions is an important way to protect our youth from tobacco industry targeting and lifelong addiction and the resulting healthcare costs. Flavored tobacco products, such as flavored e-cigarette pods and small cigars, are a gateway to nicotine addiction. Four out of five kids who use tobacco started with a flavored product. Manufacturers have introduced thousands of youth-friendly flavored tobacco products in recent years, including e-cigarettes with candy flavors and small cigars with sweet fruit flavors. As of 2017, researchers had identified more than 15,500 unique e-cigarette flavors online.

Federal laws ban flavors in cigarettes- excluding menthol- but not in other tobacco products. If a menthol cigarette ban would have been included in 2009, it could have saved more than 320,000 lives. With menthol cigarettes making up more than 35% of the cigarette market share in the United States, it is imperative for menthol to be included in a complete flavored tobacco ban.

Flavors play a significant role in drawing youth and young adults to tobacco products, with over 80% of kids who use tobacco starting with a flavored tobacco product. With over 80% of adult tobacco users starting before the age of 18, the Healthy Lompoc Coalition believes that action must be taken to dissuade youth use of tobacco products in our communities County wide. It is for this reason that we strongly endorse this proposal. Support of this action shows the Santa Barbara County community that our county believes firmly in preventing youth from beginning to smoke and vape.

The Healthy Lompoc Coalition fully supports the Santa Barbara County legislation restricting the sale of flavored tobacco. This is paramount to the health and safety of all Santa Barbara County residents.

Sincerely,



Emily Casarez, MSc.
Director of Community Health