



December 5, 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:

First 5 Santa Barbara County wholeheartedly supports the proposed policy initiative to strengthen the existing local laws that regulate the sale and distribution of tobacco products by making them less accessible to children.

Adopting strong-flavored tobacco restrictions is an important way to protect our youth from tobacco industry targeting and lifelong addiction. Manufacturers have created 15,500 unique youth-friendly flavored tobacco products in recent years, including e-cigarettes and cigars with flavors such as gummy bear, cotton candy, and peanut butter cup. Federal laws ban flavors in cigarettes, excluding menthol, but not in any other tobacco products. Menthol products are disproportionately used by smokers who are young, female, part of a sexual minority, or part of a racial or ethnic minority. Menthol facilitates addiction and disease, and it is imperative for menthol also to be included in a complete flavored tobacco ban.

The tobacco and vape industry spends \$900,000 an hour on marketing and price discounts to lure new and existing users into addiction. Restricting pricing strategies and establishing requirements based on minimum pack and price is another way to prevent predatory pricing and discounting of tobacco products. This would eliminate discounting schemes that encourage consumption and increase the number of units per package to raise the price of cheap tobacco products, making them less accessible.

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 in undercover operations, and 10% of these stores illegally sold tobacco to a minor. Youth who purchase tobacco products from local stores almost always choose flavored tobacco due to their sweet tastes and appealing names.

It is of the utmost importance that something be done to address this issue within our community.

First 5 Santa Barbara County endorses this proposal for all of the following reasons:

1. Flavors, including menthol, play a significant role in drawing youth and young adults to tobacco products.
2. Over 80% of adult tobacco users started before the age of 18.
3. Tobacco is a gateway drug, and data clearly shows that its use among youth increases their likelihood to engage in other risky behaviors.
4. Over 80% of kids who use tobacco started with a flavored tobacco product.
5. Shows the Santa Barbara County community that our County believes firmly in preventing youth from beginning to smoke and vape.

We fully support the Santa Barbara County legislation restricting the sale of flavored tobacco, restricting pricing strategies, and establishing requirements based on minimum pack and price. This is paramount to the health and safety of Santa Barbara County residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wendy Sims-Moten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and a long, sweeping tail.

Wendy Sims-Moten
Executive Director