

The Honorable Corey Johnson  
Speaker, New York City Council  
City Hall Office  
New York, NY 10007

February 3, 2020

Dear Speaker Johnson:

On behalf of the New York City Cancer Consortium, we write to request your support for Intro 1345, which would restrict the sale of menthol cigarettes. We urge you to bring this bill to a vote this month.

In 2009, the New York City Council took the bold step of banning the sale of flavored cigarettes in New York City. However, the ban excluded a crucial group of flavors—menthol, mint, and wintergreen. This exclusion has allowed glaring racial and ethnic disparities in smoking rates to persist for a decade. According to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the tobacco industry targets advertising for menthol cigarettes to teens and communities of color. Additionally, there is evidence that the smoking rate for menthol cigarettes is higher among African Americans and Latinos. The ongoing availability of these products presents a public health threat to all New Yorkers, but particularly for youth and for populations in which smoking rates have persisted despite broad smoking cessation efforts. We believe that it is vital for City Council to close this gap and ban all flavored cigarettes.

As a collaborative of the 5 NYC Cancer Centers designated by the National Cancer Institute, we are dedicated to promoting the health of all New Yorkers and to supporting public policy that decreases risk factors for cancer. Cigarettes contribute to over 12 different types of cancers, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that tobacco use is linked to up to 40% of all cancers diagnosed in the United States. Given the ongoing prevalence of tobacco-related illnesses and cancers, we consider tobacco prevention and cessation as core to our mission to promote public health and to prevent cancer.

We are grateful for your leadership in banning flavored e-cigarettes through the recent passage of Intro 1362. This bill has made New York City a leader in protecting children's health. However, the New York City Council can do more to protect public health and prevent cancer by closing the gap in the sale of flavored cigarettes. Intro 1345 would expand the ban on the sale of flavored cigarettes to include menthol, mint and wintergreen flavors. By banning the sale of these flavored cigarettes, the New York City Council will help to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in smoking rates and will further protect youth from becoming addicted to harmful nicotine products.

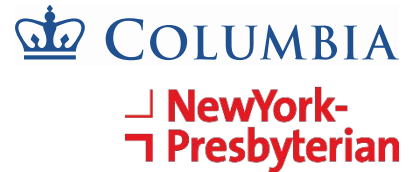
Thank you for your consideration and support for efforts to curb this ongoing public health crisis.

Sincerely,

*Anil K. Rustgi, M.D.*

**Anil K Rustgi, MD**

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