



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

RAHM EMANUEL
MAYOR

July 25, 2013

Dr. Carolyn C. Lopez
President
Chicago Board of Health
2906 West Wilson Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60625

Dear Dr. Lopez,

I was proud to join the Board of Health and the Department of Public Health shortly after I became Mayor to launch Healthy Chicago, the first comprehensive public health platform for our City. Since tobacco related illness is the single biggest reason for preventable disease and death in our city, we have made limiting tobacco use, particularly among Chicago's children, a top priority.

When the majority of young people who become addicted to smoking pick up the deadly habit through the use of flavored tobacco products, it is clear that we can focus our efforts. Of particular concern are menthol-flavored cigarettes, the single most popular tobacco product among youth. Among African-American children (ages 12 - 17) who smoke, 72% use menthol-flavored cigarettes and among young LGBT smokers, 71% choose a menthol brand. Children from Asian, Hispanic and white communities also show a disproportionate preference for flavored brands.

If smokers begin the habit before the age of 18 they are close to 75% more likely to carry it with them into their adulthood, making the popularity of flavored tobacco products even more of a concern. Among those who persist in smoking, one third will die about 13 years earlier than their nonsmoking peers.

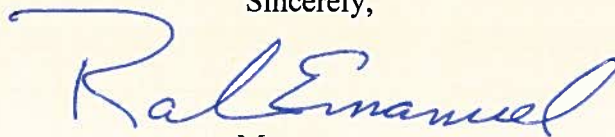
The toll that smoking takes on many Chicago communities is tragic but also preventable. We must find ways to protect our young people before it is too late and addiction becomes part of their lives. When smoking snuffs out so many lives in our city, we must do more as a city to discourage young people from starting this deadly habit. That is why I am formally requesting that the Board of Health to engage both Chicago's residents and national content experts to study the impact of flavored tobacco products, including menthol-flavored cigarettes, on the public health of Chicago's children.

The goal of this process is to engage in a community-driven approach for identifying “winnable” policy solutions that will curb the use of flavored tobacco products among the most vulnerable: our children.

Our city has too much to lose from failing to act. When it comes to the health our children, we cannot wait for action from the State or Federal Level. We must take our future into our hands so that our children can enjoy a prosperous and healthy future.

I respectfully request your urgent assistance. Working together, we can ensure a better future for the life of our children and the life of our great city.

Sincerely,



Ral Emanuel

Mayor