



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**100 STATE AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORT ENDING THE SALE  
OF FLAVORED TOBACCO IN DENVER  
— Local Leaders Available for Interview —**

*Denver, Colo.* — A coalition of organizations leading the effort to end the sale of flavored tobacco products in Denver just hit a milestone with [100 endorsing organizations](#). These groups -- including The Denver African American Commission, Colorado Nursing Association, Brother Jeff's Cultural Center, Latina Initiative, and more -- have been advocating for the Denver City Council to pass an ordinance that would prohibit the sale of flavored tobacco of any kind – including menthol cigarettes, flavored e-cigarettes and flavored little cigars – in the City and County of Denver.

Tobacco companies have a long history of marketing their products to African Americans, Latinos, LGBTQ youth and other communities using magazine advertising, event sponsorships, free samples, promotions and other tactics. Among the endorsing organizations is One Colorado. “Tobacco use is the most serious, yet preventable, health crisis facing LGBTQ youth in their teens and 20s,” said **Michael Crews, Policy Director for One Colorado**. “We can’t continue to allow the industry to exploit young people in our community to turn a profit. That’s why we are urging the Denver City Council to prohibit the sale of these products.”

Earlier this year the Biden Administration announced that the Food and Drug Administration will begin the rule-making process to ban menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars, in large part because of the disproportionate health impact flavored products have had on African American smokers.

“This is a matter of social justice,” urged the **Hon. Elbra Wedgeworth, Former Denver City Council President and longtime community activist**. “The tobacco industry has profited off of Black lives for decades through aggressive marketing campaigns pushing menthol products to youth in our communities. Tobacco use is a major contributor to the leading causes of death among African Americans—heart disease, cancer, and stroke. Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products is a crucial step to addressing systemic health inequities faced by African Americans in Denver.”

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“As our organization continues to identify and bridge gaps in access to build more sustainable communities in Denver, we simply can’t ignore the severe impact flavored products continue to have on Latino youth,” **said Rudy Gonzales, Executive Director of Servicios De La Raza.** “There is a false cultural link between smoking and Latino culture that has been manufactured by the tobacco industry, and flavored products are an access point. Latinos in Denver already experience disparate access to vital health services and our kids deserve the opportunity to reach adulthood without a life-long tobacco addiction ”

Flavored tobacco products have long been a tobacco industry tactic to hook youth, specifically youth of color, on their products. 80% of young people who have ever used tobacco started with a flavored product, and nearly 83% of kids who vape are using flavored products. According to the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, about 1 in 5 high schoolers in Denver use e-cigarettes.

“Flavors like cotton-candy, gummy bear and fruit loop vapes are intended to attract kids and hook them to a lifetime of addiction,” said **Dr. Ted Maynard, President of the Colorado Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics.** “We support this initiative because our kids deserve better. We have the opportunity at the local level to protect future generations from lung cancer, heart disease, COPD and other smoking-related illnesses in adulthood. Denver City Council must prioritize the health of our young people over tobacco industry profits.”

In a [recent poll](#), 65% of Denver voters said they support prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products that appeal to youth, and 80% say they are concerned that flavored tobacco is a starter product.

For additional commentary in support of this policy, the following people are available for interview:

- **Hon. Elbra Wedgeworth**, former City Council President and longtime community activist
- **Brother Jeff (Jeff Fard)**, board member for the Center for African American Health and multimedia journalist, historian, and community organizer
- **Michael Crews, Policy Director, One Colorado**
- **Rudy Gonzales, executive director of Servicios de La Raza**

To schedule interviews, please contact Stefanie Clarke, [sclarke@shedlightpr.com](mailto:sclarke@shedlightpr.com) or call 303.941.4844.

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