Menthol attracts youth to cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and other tobacco products. Tobacco companies target marginalized individuals (such as African American communities and LGBTQIA+ persons) with menthol cigarettes, which increase initiation and reduce cessation compared to non-mentholated cigarettes. Years of research show that African American communities and LGBTQIA+ persons are more likely to use menthol cigarettes. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is moving toward banning menthol as a characterizing flavor and extending that ban to flavored cigars nationwide. For now, menthol cigarettes and e-cigarettes remain available in Michigan.

Given the evidence that flavored products attract youth to start using tobacco and vaping products, reducing youth access to flavored products is key to reducing addiction among youth.

Characterizing flavor is the ‘obvious flavor’ or what the product is labeled as. Many tobacco products use menthol as an additive but are not labeled as menthol products since it is not the ‘obvious flavor’. At this time there are no plans to ban menthol as an additive so it and other flavors will still be in tobacco products.

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