



**Public Comment on Ordinance No. 184-2023**  
**Kristin Englund, MD**  
**Executive Board Member, Academy of Medicine of Cleveland & Northern Ohio**  
**March 20, 2023**

Council President Griffin and members of Cleveland City Council, thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment before you today in support of Ordinance 184.

My name is Dr. Kristin Englund, and I am an infectious disease specialist and immediate past president of the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland and Northern Ohio (AMCNO).

I am here today on behalf of more than 6,000 members of Northern Ohio's medical community to urge you to vote for the ordinance introduced on February 6<sup>th</sup> to end the sale of ALL flavored tobacco products including menthol and flavored vapes and create a tobacco retail license so that the city can better enforce existing tobacco laws.

Tobacco companies offer flavors for a simple reason – to entice the most vulnerable and most at-risk members of our community to become addicted to nicotine.

This is illustrated through the tobacco industry's targeting of Black communities with menthol cigarette campaigns starting in the 1960s. Menthol cigarettes are the original flavored tobacco products, which use a minty taste to disguise the harshness of the smoke to introduce new consumers more gently to nicotine and make them more easily addicted. Their predatory marketing led to higher rates of addiction in African American populations, and tobacco now claims approximately 45,000 Black lives each year, making it the leading cause of preventable death in the African American community.

Tobacco companies are now using similar predatory marketing schemes to attract children to their products including offering flavors like gummy bear, grape crush, and cotton candy. E-cigarette use among our children has become an epidemic, reversing decades of decline in tobacco use by kids. Flavors have enticed *almost half* of our high school kids to try vaping, and 30% of high schoolers vape regularly.

As a physician, let me be extremely clear. Nicotine is extremely harmful to children, whether it is used through smoking, vaping, or any other means. Nicotine dramatically increases the risk of drug use and mental illness for kids and harms the developing brain by negatively impacting attention, learning,

mood, impulse control, and memory. Tobacco companies know this and yet shamelessly package their products in bright colors and flavor them to taste like fruit and candy.

If we take these flavors off our shelves in Cleveland, we will protect Clevelanders from the tobacco industry's schemes and spare our youth from a lifetime of addiction and avoidable health complications. Please vote for Ordinance 184. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today.