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**FDA Ban on Menthol is a Lifesaver**  
*Protecting Georgians Against Menthol Cigarettes*

QUOTE

On Thursday, July 7, 2022 the Atlanta Black Clergy held a protest at the Atlanta City Detention Center in opposition to the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) ban on menthol cigarettes. The Atlanta Black Clergy said they fear a ban on the sale of these harmful products will lead to greater police arrests and harassment of African Americans. However, this is blatantly untrue. The proposed FDA rule explicitly states that individuals will not be arrested for possession of these products.<sup>1</sup> The FDA ban on mentholated and other flavored tobacco governs manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of the product—not an individual’s use or possession of them.<sup>1</sup>

The cold facts are these: tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death and disease in the United States<sup>2</sup> and has been the number one killer of black people for the past fifty years. The marketing and selling of mentholated and other flavored tobacco products to vulnerable populations is a social justice issue that has plagued African American communities in metro Atlanta and across the U.S. for over 70 years. Menthol in cigarettes disguises tobacco’s harsh taste and allows an individual to inhale harmful chemicals more easily. It makes smoking easier to start and harder to quit. As reported by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in (2020),<sup>4</sup> the marketing and promotion of menthol and other flavored cigarettes have been heavily targeted toward African American communities. Let’s not lose sight of the main issue, it’s the tobacco industry that is responsible for the deaths of hundreds and thousands of African Americans.

Additionally, data from countries (including Canada) that have already banned menthol cigarettes as well as data from the United States show that after banning other flavored cigarettes, there is no likelihood of international, illicit trade of menthol cigarettes after they are prohibited.<sup>5</sup> Surveys show, in fact, that a ban would encourage African Americans to quit menthols rather than seek them from an illicit market.<sup>5</sup>

The No Menthol Movement ATL (NMM-ATL) is an initiative created by the Health, Education, Awareness, and Research on Tobacco (H.E.A.R.T.) Coalition during Fall 2020. The initiative aims to address predatory marketing towards Atlanta’s vulnerable populations, reduce the burden of mentholated and other flavored tobacco products, and promote health equity by advocating for environmental policy solutions.

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References:

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