

February 1, 2021

Public Health Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Raised S.B. No. 326 - Oppose

To the Honorable Co-Chairs and members of the Public Health Committee:

I am writing to address my concerns about **Raised S.B. No. 326** being considered around flavor tobacco products, which includes menthol cigarettes. Menthol cigarettes are currently legal, and it seems counterproductive to now ban these cigarettes, especially with adults who may have used this product for decades. I stand with others from throughout our state to denounce this proposed ban.

As a Pastor and community leader, it is my moral duty to examine prospective laws to ensure they will serve the greater good for my congregation and the communities where they are enforced. As Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "In the end, for laws to be obeyed, men must believe they are right."

A menthol ban can create increased interaction between law enforcement and members of our community. You must understand, our genuine concern as we continue to fight for police accountability when working with the African American community, other people of color and the poor, if you don't ban all cigarettes you really shouldn't ban any.

With high profile cases such as Eric Gardner who died at the hands of an officer for selling a loose cigarette, it is imperative that we do not support laws that may increase police interaction. *I in no way support the use of tobacco.* I do however, ask you to carefully review the proposed ban so that it does not create more problems than it solves.

We must educate our children and not incarcerate. I plan to provide examples for them to follow through educating them on not smoking.

Thank you,

Thank you,

Cousin