

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:

We the undersigned oppose **Raised S.B. No. 326**, which would ban the sale of flavored tobacco products.

We oppose punitive laws that disproportionately affect African Americans. S.B. 326, includes menthol cigarettes, which is the preferred choice of the over 80% of African Americans who choose to smoke cigarettes.

A ban on menthol cigarettes would give police another reason to interact negatively on the retail level or with individual citizens for a low-level, non-violent offense. At a time in which we know that interactions between law enforcement and young men and women of color lead to all-too-often tragic results, we should be looking at a way to lessen any negative encounters in our community with law enforcement.

All Connecticut residents under the age of 21 are already banned from purchasing any tobacco products. Prohibiting adults from being able to purchase menthol cigarettes, in an effort to address the sale of tobacco products to minors will principally affect African-American smokers.

We believe S.B. 326 creates another racially discriminatory public policy and will lead to increased crime, targeted enforcement, unfair treatment and illegal street sales.

It is for these reasons we oppose S.B. 326, and urge you to vote NO on this measure.

Thank you,

Wayne Staggs