

# Policy Toolkit: Flavor Ban

Guide to Participating in  
Public Hearings



# 1. Know the Policy

A LOCAL LAW adding a new Chapter 539 of the Laws of Westchester County in relation to prohibiting the sale or distribution of flavored tobacco products.

## If passed...

The sale, distribution, display, offer for sale or distribution, or marketing for sale or distribution, by an establishment of any **Flavored Tobacco Product** would be *prohibited*.

## Flavored Tobacco Products include...

- Menthol Cigarettes
- Cigars, little cigars, cigarillos
- Hookah
- Pipe Tobacco
- Chewing Tobacco
- Snuff



## But what about e-cigarettes?

Actually, the sale of flavored e-cigarettes was banned in New York State back in 2020!

While vaping is still a MAJOR issue, this bill aims to address **other flavored products like the ones mentioned above**. This should be kept in mind when developing your testimony.

## 2. Know the "Why?"



*Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. It causes or contributes to many forms of cancer, as well as heart and respiratory diseases and other health disorders.*

*The financial cost of tobacco use in New York amounts to \$17.72 billion per year in direct healthcare expenses and lost productivity.*



*Each year in New York, 5,800 children become smokers. Flavored tobacco products promote the initiation of tobacco use among young people by reducing or masking the natural harshness and taste of tobacco smoke.*

*Products like menthol-flavored tobacco products are aggressively, and disproportionately, marketed towards racial minorities. Tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of death/disease among African Americans, and almost 9 out of 10 African Americans who smoke choose menthol cigarettes, compared to less than 30% of white smokers.*



*The federal Food and Drug Administration has advanced two proposed tobacco product standards - one prohibiting menthol as a characterizing flavor in cigarettes and another prohibiting all characterizing flavors (including menthol) in cigars. Unfortunately, these rules will take years to finalize, enact, and enforce.*

# 3. Know the Rules

Each legislature has its own unique standing rules that might impact the way that you participate in public hearings. This document will detail the rules of the upcoming Westchester County Public Hearing.

## The Basics

- Each speaker is given three minutes
- Speakers will be called in order of registration
- The Public Hearing will begin at 7:30 p.m. on November 14th
- The Public Hearing will be held at the Westchester Legislature at 148 Martine Avenue, 8th Floor. White Plains, New York



Participating in a public hearing can be intimidating, especially if you are a younger person testifying in front of a lot of adults.

In reality, legislators will applaud you for getting involved, so there is no need to be intimidated by them. They are public servants, working to serve you, so tell them what matters to you and what can and should be changed.

## In-Person

**If attending in person, we strongly encourage you to bring your colleagues, friends, family, and neighbors!**

**Registration opens online at 6:15 p.m. on the day of the meeting but there will be additional opportunities to sign up in person just before the hearing.**

**Once called on, you will make your way to the podium to give your testimony and once the three minutes is up you step down and that's all there is to it!**

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## Virtual

**While there is a virtual option, we urge all speakers to attend in person! Remember, there is strength in numbers!**

**Registrants can speak by telephone or by the Board's Webex online teleconferencing system (similar to zoom!)**

**Registration opens online at 6:15 p.m. on the day of the meeting and is cut off at 7:00 pm**

**Online participants will be muted until it is their turn to speak. Then, they will be given permission to unmute by the host and can give their testimony.**

# 4. Tips for Developing and Presenting Your Testimony

**1**

**Share your story!** While statistics and facts are great, legislators really want to hear about how the issue at hand impacts you, your loved ones, and your community.

**2**

Be sure to mention what town you are from/what school you go to. Your County Legislator will take notice.

**3**

Keep on topic. Remember that this bill is NOT about vape devices, it is about other flavored products like menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars

**4**

No need to memorize! You can read off of your paper. Print it in a big and bold font so that it is easily readable.

**5**

Practice practice practice. Recording yourself reciting the testimony is a good way to identify if you need to slow down, enunciate words, speak louder, etc.

# 5. Testimony Template

- Hello my name is \_\_\_\_\_
- I live in \_\_\_\_\_ and go to \_\_\_\_\_ Highschool
- This legislation is important to me because \_\_\_\_\_  
(explain in your own words the problem that the law seeks to fix and why it matters to you)
  - *Do you have a parent or grandparent with a smoking-related illness like lung cancer or emphysema?*
  - *Do your friends use these products (stick to hookah, menthol cigarettes, flavored cigars)? Have they pressured you to use them?*
  - *Do you see advertisements for these products?*
  - *Do not use too many statistics here. You can submit a letter to the committee with all of the data and facts you want them to know, but your oral testimony should be PERSONAL.*
  - *Tell them why YOU care and why you want their help. Your goal should be to help lawmakers understand the issue as though they were standing in YOUR shoes in YOUR community. Paint a picture of the problem in your community: What you see. What you hear. What you know to be true.*
- Thank you for your time and attention