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Menthol Cigarette Ban Shows Biden Administration Is Putting Black Lives On The National Agenda, Says Assemblymember Bichotte Hermelyn Who Carried NYS Bill

(Brooklyn, NY) – April, 28, 2021 – “The Biden administration’s proposed ban on menthol tobacco products shows that Black lives are - at last - becoming a part of the national health care agenda,” said **Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn**, who is championing a **menthol tobacco ban (A3499)** in the New York State Assembly with state **Senator Brad Hoylman (S84)**, **Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal** and advocates including **American Cancer Society, NAACP and Flavors Hook Kids**.

“Menthol tobacco use disproportionately harms communities of color. In 2019, I introduced this bill after my father passed away from lung disease resulting from smoking,” **Bichotte Hermelyn** continued. “I quickly realized that his death was not an accident. Big tobacco companies have targeted people like my dad with these products for decades. In fact, nine out of 10 Black smokers use menthol products because of tobacco companies’ successful marketing tactics targeting the African American community.”

African American neighborhoods have a disproportionate number of tobacco retailers, pervasive tobacco marketing and, in particular, more marketing of menthol products, according to Tobacco Free Kids. The density of retailers near schools is even higher in some low-income and Black neighborhoods. “The ‘flavored’ products especially appeal to children,” **Bichotte Hermelyn** continued.

“During COVID-19, we saw two and three times the death rate from the virus in Black communities. Asthma and heart disease are up. We have to wonder, how many Black lives would have been saved had the menthol ban gone into effect a decade ago? Health experts say hundreds of thousands.

“Today, I thank the Biden administration for their proposed menthol cigarette ban.” **Bichotte Hermelyn** said. “It shows that equitable health care and health policy is finally on the horizon.”

Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn represents the 42nd Assembly District in Brooklyn covering Ditmas Park, Flatbush, East Flatbush and Midwood. She is currently the **Chair of the Subcommittee on Oversight of Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBES)**, and serves on the following committees: **Housing, Government Operations, Education, Banks, Health, and Higher Education**. She is also a member of the Task Force on Women’s Issues and sits on **Governor Cuomo’s Domestic Violence Advisory Council and Mayor De Blasio’s MWBE Task Force**.