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CONTACT: Dr. Sharon Harris

516- 676-2008 safeglencove@yahoo.com

SAFE Glen Cove Coalition- Blended Flavoring in all Tobacco Products Entice Vulnerable Youth

According to an article published in the *Journal of Nicotine and Tobacco Research*, results of a recent survey of current e-cigarette use indicate that e-cigarettes that blend strong fruit, sweet, and cooling tastes are extremely popular to young users.

To identify which flavor blends or concept flavors are used by youth and young adult e-cigarette users and classify how fruity, cooling, sweet, or minty the products tasted, researchers surveyed 2,281 current e-cigarette users between ages 15-24 about any flavor blends and concept flavors they were currently using. Survey respondents rated the strength of fruity, cooling, sweet, or minty taste of their current flavors.

The study demonstrated that three-quarters (74.8%) reported using blended flavors, and over half (57.9%) used concept flavors in the past month. Blended flavors with fruit or cooling flavor descriptions were the most popular, including Iced Mango (30.2%), Banana Ice (26.4%), Lush Ice (23.8%), and Melon Ice (22.9%). Use of multiple concept flavors was also common, with more than one-third (38.2%) reporting use of three or more concept flavors within the past 30 days.

Most concept flavors had less intense taste than the flavor blends with descriptors, however, some did not significantly differ from flavor blends in the strength of their fruity, cooling, sweet, or minty taste, including Tropic, Bahama Mama, Marigold, Island Breeze, Winter, Honeymoon, Island Cream, Meteor Milk, OMG, and Royal Dagger. Arctic had a significantly stronger cooling sensation than flavor blends with cooling descriptors.

The results highlighted the need to establish consistent classifications of flavored e-cigarettes to track the proliferation of new products and flavors and to help policymakers identify and regulate all e-cigarette flavors that appeal to young people.

Despite restrictions enacted by the Food and Drug Administration in 2020 to eliminate flavors (excluding menthol) flavored e-cigarettes remain widely popular. The ban only applied to cartridge-based e-cigarettes like JUUL, leaving many flavored products, including disposable e-cigarettes on the market. More than half (56.8%) of youth and young adult e-cigarette users surveyed used disposable e-cigarettes most often in the past month while less than a quarter (22.7%) used cartridge-based, or “pod mod,” systems covered by FDA flavor restrictions.

The use of blended and concept flavors aligns with historic tactics of “Big Tobacco” commodifying product characteristics, labeling, or packaging to maintain sales and subvert flavor restrictions designed to deter youth use. Concept flavors pose a challenge for enforcement of flavored tobacco restrictions, as they make it difficult for enforcement agencies to determine whether a tobacco product meets the legal definition of a flavored tobacco product.

The presence of cooling e-cigarette flavors poses a serious concern given that the cooling attributes of menthol have been shown to play a role in tobacco use initiation among young people. Research has found that both fruit and cooling flavors can suppress nicotine’s harsh and irritable effects,

counterbalancing a barrier that may otherwise prevent youth and young adults from using higher nicotine e-cigarettes. By combining appealing flavors such as fruit and sweets with cooling properties, products are likely to facilitate experimentation and established use of e-cigarettes which has long been the concern over mentholated products. More than 80 percent of youth who ever tried tobacco started with a flavored product, and 545 of youth ages 12-17 who smoke use mentholated cigarettes.

Researchers recommend that restrictions on flavored e-cigarettes be expanded to include all device types to address the continued proliferation of flavors with youth appeal, and that policies to eliminate menthol should be expanded to include other cooling additives. Sadly 280,00 NY Youth are projected to die prematurely from smoking. This is a static that should resonate with alarms bells for all adults.

For help Quitting smoking or vaping or to help a loved beat a Nicotine Addition please visit the American Lung Association on their Website at: www.americanlung.org. "The American Lung Association says the only thing that should go into your lungs is clean air, so if you're inhaling anything, it could potentially be toxic to your lungs!

The New York State Smokers' Quitline assists thousands of New Yorkers every year in their attempts to break free from smoking and other tobacco and the service is free and confidential. Call 1-866-NYQUITS (1-866-697-8487) or visit them at: <https://www.nysmokefree.com/> for Quit Help.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention, and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. The Coalition is concerned about all combustible and electronic products with marijuana and tobacco. The Agency is employing environmental strategies to educate and update the community regarding the negative consequences in collaboration with Carol Meschkow, Manager- Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or to learn more about electronic products visit the Vaping Facts and Myths Page of SAFE's website to learn more about how vaping is detrimental to your health www.safeglencove.org.