



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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Mayor Lightfoot Take Latest Action Against E-Cigarette Industry

Lawsuit targets vaping business that marketed and sold flavored vaping products, including to underage Chicagoans

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP), and the Department of Law filed a lawsuit against Equite, LLC and Vapes.com for marketing and selling flavored vaping products, including to underage Chicagoans. This is the first lawsuit enforcing the City's recent ban on flavored tobacco products.

"E-cigarettes are unhealthy and addictive, and businesses deliberately target young people in the hope they'll develop lifelong customers," said Mayor Lightfoot. "The City of Chicago's message to vaping companies is clear: If you break the law, we will go after you, especially if you try to sell to our youth."

Under Mayor Lightfoot, Chicago has undertaken significant action to reduce the use of vaping, especially its underage residents. Last September the City Council passed an ordinance banning the sale of flavored vaping products in Chicago, targeting liquid nicotine products that create taste or aroma other than tobacco. The ordinance was the latest measure by the City to prevent young people from developing a potentially lifelong addiction to nicotine.

BACP conducted the investigation that identified the defendants as having violated the City's flavored tobacco ban.

"BACP takes great pride in keeping our young people safe from vaping and holding bad actors accountable," said BACP Commissioner Rosa Escareno. "We will continue to closely monitor activity and pursue all incidents so that every e-cigarette company understands that flavored vape sales are not welcome in the city of Chicago."

"I applaud Mayor Lightfoot's strong leadership on this important issue," said Alderman Matt O'Shea. "This lawsuit not only takes these companies to task, but



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sends a clear message to anyone who thinks they can push vaping products onto our kids and get away with it.”

The City has filed numerous lawsuits against vaping manufacturers and retailers for deceptive marketing and illegal sales to young people.

“Studies have shown that 80 percent of youth tobacco users started with a flavored product such as e-cigarettes or menthol cigarettes, and 80 percent of youth and young adult users say they would quit if flavored tobacco products were unavailable,” said Chicago Department of Health Commissioner Allison Arwady. “Yet flavors are often marketed to give youth the impression that flavored products are safer than other tobacco products. This deceit not only harms the individual, but also has ripple effects across the public health system. It is imperative that we use every strategy and resource available to prevent the sale of flavored tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.”

Chicago was also one of the first cities in the nation to add e-cigarettes to its Clean Indoor Air Ordinance, the first big city to impose a vaping tax, and the first jurisdiction anywhere to include menthol in a flavored tobacco sales ban, which covers stores within 500 feet of high schools. Numerous other jurisdictions have since followed Chicago’s lead by instituting flavored tobacco bans that include menthol.

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