



Dr. Robert Califf
Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20993

RE: Docket Number FDA-2021-N-1309 Tobacco Product Standard for Characterizing Flavors in Cigars

Smokefree SC is commenting to voice its strong support for the Food and Drug Administration's proposed tobacco product standard prohibiting characterizing flavors in cigars. Smokefree SC, a statewide coalition dedicated to supporting and amplifying the work of tobacco prevention and control stakeholders in South Carolina, is committed to eliminating premature death, disease, and other harms caused by tobacco products. This standard will have a significant effect on reducing the appeal of cigars to youth and young adults.

The Youth Tobacco Survey in South Carolina showed 4.6% of our high schoolers had smoked a cigar in the last month, which is higher than for smoking cigarettes (3.3%). Youth are attracted by the low cost of cigars and the great number of cigar flavors offered. Our point-of-sale work with Counter Tools shows that 92.7% of our tobacco retailers offer cigarillos, little cigars or blunts and 97.6% of those offer flavored products in cigarillos, little cigars or blunts. Price promotions were offered by 35% of retailers for these products, making them even cheaper.

As the FDA notes, vulnerable populations such as low-income, LGBTQ, racial minorities and youth have higher prevalence and use rates of cigars which lead to tobacco-related health disparities. Prohibiting characterizing flavors in cigars will reduce the appeal of cigars to all vulnerable populations, especially youth and young adults, resulting in decreased experimentation, nicotine dependence and progression to regular use – this will translate into substantial reductions in preventable tobacco-related deaths and disease.

Smokefree SC stands with Public Health Organizations across the country in urging the FDA to act swiftly in issuing this rule.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Derrick".

Barbara Derrick
Interim Executive Director