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MEMO IN SUPPORT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 30, 2007

Re: A.7368 (Paulin)/S. 4517 (Fuschillo)

An Act to amend the public health law, in relation to prohibiting the sale of flavored cigarettes.

This measure, A.7368/S. 4517, would prohibit the sale in New York of cigarettes containing natural or artificial additives (other than menthol) that impart to the cigarette or its smoke flavors attractive to youth including, but not limited to, fruit, chocolate, vanilla, honey, candy, mint, cocoa, dessert, alcoholic beverage, herb or spice flavoring. The New York Health Plan Association (HPA) supports passage of this bill.

Managed care plans are founded on principles that emphasize primary and preventive care. As part of their comprehensive approach to health care, HPA member plans have long sought to educate their members and the general public on the dangers of smoking (in addition to helping members that do smoke quit).

Flavored cigarettes are the tobacco industry's latest marketing tactics, and are clearly aimed at children. R.J. Reynolds – which once marketed cigarettes to kids with a cartoon character, "Joe Camel" – has launched a series of flavored cigarettes, including a pineapple and coconut-flavored cigarette ("Kauai Kolada") and a citrus-flavored cigarette ("Twista Lime") while Brown & Williamson has introduced flavored versions of its Kool cigarettes ("Caribbean Chill," "Midnight Berry," "Mocha Taboo" and "Mintrigue"). At least seven manufacturers currently market flavored cigarettes in New York.

Candy-flavored cigarettes have their greatest appeal to new smokers, 90 percent of whom are under 19. A national survey by Roswell Park Cancer Institute found 21 percent of smokers 17 to 19 years old reported having used flavored cigarettes in the past 30 days. By contrast, only 8 percent of smokers over age 25 had smoked flavored cigarettes. Established smokers are unlikely to give up their favorite brands for these new cigarettes. Children, however, will be tempted to give them a try and, when they do, many will get hooked on nicotine.

New York should and can meet this challenge head on – before cigarette companies hook thousands of new, young smokers.

For these reasons, HPA strongly supports enactment of this legislation.

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The New York Health Plan Association represents 30 managed care health plans that provide comprehensive health care services to nearly 6 million New Yorkers.