



Testimony in support of HB 2270

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April 10, 2019

Chair Nathanson and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of HB 2270 to increase the tobacco and nicotine tax in Oregon. The Oregon Nurses Association is proud to represent over 15,000 nurses working in settings from large hospitals to small local clinics, corrections, school-based health centers and community-based public health. As such, ONA members across the board see the significant health consequences of tobacco and nicotine use in the lives of Oregonians.

Raising the price of tobacco and nicotine products is the single most effective tool to reducing use. Data shows that for every 10% increase in product price leads to a 4% decrease in adult consumption and a 7% decrease in youth consumption.¹ Tobacco use is widely known to cause heart disease, diabetes, asthma, and cancer, ultimately costing Oregon \$2.9 billion a year in health care costs, lost productivity and early death.² Further, nearly 9% of all annual health care spending is attributable to cigarette smoking, with more than 60% of that spending paid by public programs like Medicaid and Medicare.³

With one in four Oregonians covered by the Oregon Health Plan, nurses can speak first-hand to how access to primary and preventative care through Medicaid expansion has improved the health of some of the most vulnerable Oregonians. Medicaid expansion has decreased hospitalizations, emergency room utilizations, high school drop-out rates, and adolescent mortality rates while raising income, wealth and college graduation rates. Passing a tobacco tax is a critical component of fully funding Medicaid at \$346 million per biennium, as well as to make meaningful investments in community and culturally specific public health programs to support tobacco and nicotine prevention and cessation work.

Currently, Oregon ranks 32nd among states in our cigarette tax with e-cigarettes going completed untaxed and unregulated.⁴ A tax on e-cigarettes and a \$2 per pack increase on traditional cigarettes would provide long-term health care cost savings to the state and tax-payer and help prevent new generations of Oregonians from facing a lifetime of addiction. Young people are particularly price-sensitive, which is why it's vital that Oregon increase the tax on *all* tobacco and nicotine products, including e-cigarettes.

HB 2270 will help reduce smoking and saves lives, while also raising revenue that can be used to fund vital health care services and public health programs. As direct care providers for many Oregonians who suffer from chronic illness as a result of tobacco and nicotine use and patients struggling to quit smoking, Oregon's nurses urge your support of fully funding Medicaid by passing a robust tobacco and e-cigarette tax.

¹ OHA Data, 2019

² OHA Data, 2019

³ OHA Data, 2019

⁴ Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids