

## Testimony on HB 2270

Dear Chair Representative Nancy Nathanson, Vice-Chair Representative Lynn Findley, and Vice Chair Representative Pam Marsh,

Thank you for accepting my personal testimony in support of the Tobacco Tax, HB 2270. My name is Dr. Ann Turner. I am speaking from my personal experience as a physician who worked with underserved populations at Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center, a migrant and community health center, serving more than 40,000 patients in Washington and Yamhill Counties. As a physician, I cared for patients with multiple chronic illnesses--diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and emphysema. Many of these patients also used tobacco and had since adolescence.

I passionately believe that we must enact this tax on tobacco for the following reasons:

- Reducing the number of Oregonians dying from tobacco-caused illnesses.

Tobacco is the number one cause of preventable death in Oregon. It causes more deaths than obesity, alcohol, motor vehicle and firearms accidents and illicit drug use combined. Many studies have shown that higher prices on cigarettes is one of the most effective interventions in reducing smoking. Since most people who smoke start smoking before they are 18, this tax will be particularly effective in preventing kids from starting to use tobacco products. This bill will also tax e-cigarettes, the fastest growing tobacco product in Oregon; it is currently not taxed at all. E-cigarettes and “vaping” have special appeal for youth with rates of use in high school students almost doubling from 2017 to 2018. We saw this in our school-based health centers.

- Achieving Health Equity.

Tobacco use has a disproportionate impact on low income populations, communities of color and tribal communities. In fact, the tobacco industry targets low income communities. Low income communities have higher incidences of chronic illnesses and those with chronic illnesses often smoke (one in four). Oregonians on the Oregon Health Plan are more likely to smoke than those who are insured with private insurance.

- Funding the Oregon Health Plan

The Affordable Care Act made it possible for States to expand its Medicaid program to cover low income adults. Thankfully, Oregon chose this option. As a physician working in a community health center, I know firsthand how important health insurance is for low income adults who suffer from a higher incidence of chronic diseases than more affluent populations. Patients with chronic illnesses often need costly care, including specialty care and expensive medications, to live healthy and productive lives. Helping adults stay healthy, able to work and care for their children and aging parents means less cost to our health system and healthier communities overall. We must continue to fund the expansion of the Oregon Health Plan.

I, therefore, urge you to support the Tobacco Tax, HB 2270, not only to improve the health of Oregonians by decreasing their tobacco use and preventing kids from ever using tobacco products, but to provide a stable source of funding for the Oregon Health Plan, assuring that low income adults receive the care they deserve to continue to be productive members of our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

Sincerely,

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