



ALEX CUYLER

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DATE: April 10, 2019
TO: House Committee on Revenue
RE: HB 2270, relating to taxes on nonfood consumer products

Chair Nathanson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing ample time and access for accepting comment on HB 2270. Lane County has examined this measure and offers its support for both increasing the tax rate on cigarettes and for expanding the definition of tobacco products to include inhalant delivery systems such that these are taxed under ORS 323.505.

Lane County's Health and Human Services Department works closely with the Oregon Health Authority to educate our residents about tobacco use with the intent that we prevent individuals from becoming consumers of nicotine and encourage current users to engage with cessation services. Of particular concern is data which shows increasing consumption of nicotine products between 2013 and 2017 by 11th graders within Lane County.

There are a number of tactics that we employ in this work, including the development of tobacco free facility and parks policies (2017), the expansion of tobacco retail licensing (2014), and focused efforts to address youth prevention (2017). Each of these was codified into local law by the Board of Commissioners acting in their authority as the Board of Health. Additionally, our staff has regularly worked with local cities on enforcement of the Indoor Clean Air Act.

However, the one tool that is out of local government's reach is the ability to increase the price of tobacco products through taxation policies. That tool has been found to be effective at getting people to re-examine their behavior towards tobacco products and in particular is very good at deterring youth from becoming users. Thus we are supporting the significant increase in the cigarette tax rate that is proposed within HB 2270.

It is our understanding that some of the revenue resulting from this tax increase will be utilized to evolve public health modernization. Gaining a permanent source of funding for public health foundational programs and capabilities now statutorily outlined within ORS Chapter 431 is one of Lane County's top budgetary priorities. It is our expectation that through the provision of these funds, Lane County will be able to further decrease the community wide costs of health care while improving health outcomes for our residents.

SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY