



June 18th, 2019

Chair Senator Hass and Members of the Joint Committee on Tax Expenditures

Dear Legislators,

Tobacco addiction accounts for the number one cause of preventable death in Oregon and around the country and nearly 30% of all cancers can be attributed to tobacco addiction. The toll of tobacco on Oregon is significant, tobacco costs our state billions of dollars in health care costs and lost productivity every year. But the impact of tobacco isn't limited to economic factors, every year nearly 8,000 Oregonians lose a loved-one from tobacco-related death. Addressing the issue of nicotine addiction has never been more urgent than it is now given recent studies showing a significant increase in youth use of e-cigarettes.

Evidence shows a regular and significant increase in the cost of tobacco is the best public health policy to encourage current smokers to quit while pricing youth out of their first nicotine product. Our state has not seen what can be qualified as a significant tobacco tax increase since 2002. Oregon is the only state to decrease our tobacco tax, it is clear our state is falling behind in protecting our communities. Oregon ranks 32nd in the nation for tobacco taxes, the national average for tobacco tax is \$1.79 and our state's tax is just \$1.33.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, e-cigarettes are now the most commonly used tobacco product surpassing conventional cigarettes in 2014. Evidence also indicates e-cigarettes provide an enticing and perceived less-harmful addictive gateway for youth to traditional cigarettes. Since their arrival on the market, e-cigarettes use among young Oregonians has increased exponentially creating a public health emergency. Establishing the state's first-ever e-cigarette tax will help to increase the cost, making the harmful products less accessible to price-sensitive youth.

Because tobacco and nicotine addiction causes significant economic and deadly harm to Oregonians, ACS CAN is supportive of HB 2270 A without any further amendments, as a proven strategy to reduce addiction and save lives. Given the shocking epidemic of youth addiction to e-cigarettes, it's critical to the health of young Oregonians that we continue to empower local leaders to curb the deadly addiction. Boards of Health throughout Oregon have been at the forefront of combatting tobacco addiction, often paving a path for state-wide tobacco control policy.

Regards,

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