

Regarding Tobacco Retail Licensing in Oregon
SB 587
3/1/2021

Chair Patterson, Vice-Chair Knopp, and members of the committee;

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for SB 587 on behalf of Vibrant Future Coalition (VFC). VFC is a coalition in north Clackamas and east Multnomah counties that educates and creates community wide change in order to prevent youth substance use. Tobacco retail licensing has the ability to reduce tobacco use among youth in our community by identifying who sells tobacco, monitoring their compliance, and enforcing penalties if tobacco is sold to minors.

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death as it is a major risk factor for many cancers, heart disease, diabetes, and asthma. It prematurely kills around 7,800 people in Oregon a year and costs the state about \$2.9 billion every year in lost productivity and medical costs. While cigarette use among youth has decreased significantly since the 1990's, e-cigarette use among 11th graders increased from 5% in 2013 to 23% in 2019. The General Surgeon states that nearly 90% of adult smokers begin smoking before the age of 18. Tobacco retail licensing has been shown to decrease illegal sales of tobacco to youth and prevent them from using tobacco products in the first place.

Low-income communities and Black, Indigenous, and people of color are more likely to use tobacco products due to where they live. In low-income neighborhoods, tobacco advertising is more prevalent, tobacco products are cheaper, and stores that sell tobacco cluster at higher rates. Due to this, 31% of people who make under \$20,000 a year use tobacco in Oregon compared to 9% of people who make over \$50,000 a year. Additionally, 30% of Native American/Alaska Native, 26% of Pacific Islander, and 25% of Black people smoke cigarettes in Oregon compared to just 17% of white people, which demonstrates the health inequities that are so prevalent in our state.

Similarly to the way stores attain licenses to sell cannabis or alcohol, tobacco retail licensing (TRL) would require stores to obtain a license in order to sell tobacco. By doing this, the Department of Revenue would have a list of stores that sell tobacco, where these stores are located, and whether they are complying with state and federal laws around selling tobacco to minors. If a store fails a compliance check, the store would have to pay a penalty. Additionally, tobacco retail licensing can limit clustering of retailers in low income neighborhoods and not allow them within 1,000 feet of schools or in residential neighborhoods, which would decrease access of tobacco to minors.

Oregon is one of only a handful of states that does not have a state-wide tobacco retail licensing law. However, many counties and municipalities in Oregon have local laws on this topic, including Multnomah County, Salem, Eugene, Ashland, Benton County, Springfield, and Silverton. With large support throughout the state of Oregon, tobacco retail licensing is an evidence-based strategy to keep tobacco out of the hands of minors and reduce the number of people impacted by the repercussions of this drug.

Thank you for your time.

May Yates on behalf of Vibrant Future Coalition