

March 21, 2023

RE: HB 3090



Good afternoon Chair Nosse and the House Behavioral Health and Health Care Committee.

I'm Jennifer Little and I'm the director for Klamath County Public Health. I'm here today in support of House Bill 3090, to ban flavored tobacco in Oregon.

My first job in public health was as the tobacco prevention coordinator, and the issues I was dealing with 10 years ago are the same issues we are still fighting today—flavored tobacco that's hooking our kids on nicotine. Did you know that tobacco continues to be the number one cause of preventable disease and death in this country? Billions of dollars are spent on tobacco-related healthcare costs. Youth who initiate tobacco use are likely to become addicted, long-term users. In fact, 90% of smokers start in their teens. They in turn contribute to the medical burden we all bear.

I know you care about the rising cost of health care and the growing Medicaid budget. This policy is where an ounce of prevention will indeed get us a pound of cure.

Show tobacco 'candy jar'

Do you know what this is? Everything in this jar is a flavored tobacco product. Banana split, wham bam watermelon, tropical, chocolate. Yes, adults like candy flavors too, but these flavors and colorful packaging give the illusion of fun and safety for youth. And quite frankly, flavors make smoking a more pleasurable experience, which in turn keeps adults addicted too.

A few months ago I was at a community meeting and two principals came up to me and asked what public health could do to help them with the youth vaping issue they are dealing with. They see their students sneaking vapes into classrooms and smoking in the bathrooms and buses. (They are getting suspended from school because of it)

show confiscated vapes

These are confiscated vape pens from just three small schools, this year. (When I open this container, it has an overwhelming smell of fruity flavors)

These students often think vapes are safe, but when my prevention coordinator meets with them in small groups, they admit they are addicted.

In 2019, 1 in 5 of 8th graders and nearly 1 in 3 of 11th graders in Klamath County report having used flavored tobacco products, and 12% report using just in the past 30 days. These students aren't smoking unflavored e-cigs—they're flavored. Local youth have said it would be gross to use flavorless vapes.

This has to stop! Education isn't enough. We need strong policy change to rid our state of deadly tobacco products that are addicting our youth and killing our community members.

I implore you to support House Bill 3090, which will ban flavored tobacco in Oregon.

Thank you.