



February 27, 2025
HB 2528 - Support

Chair Sosa and members of the committee: my name is Sarah Lochner. I'm the Executive Director for the Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials (CLHO) representing Oregon's 33 local public health departments.

I am here today to express strong support for HB 2528, a bill brought forward by the Governor and the Oregon Health Authority to close loopholes in our tobacco and nicotine regulatory laws.

Public Health has been fighting the fight against tobacco and nicotine products for decades. Many of my members started their public health careers as tobacco prevention specialists and the issues they were dealing with 10 years ago are still the same issues they are fighting today - the tobacco industry is crafty and innovative. They hire the best lawyers to find the loopholes in the laws and then create new products that exploit those loopholes. And they continue to hook our kids with these new products.

Products made with synthetic nicotine circumvent our current legal definition of tobacco, so this substance is used in lieu of natural nicotine derived from tobacco plants in mouth pouches, gums, tablets, and gummies – with tasty flavors like mint, cinnamon, and various fruit flavors - raspberry lemonade, for example.

These are products that youth can use without teachers knowing; without parents knowing. "It's just gum, mom." When was the last time you inspected your kids' gum package? That's why it's so incredibly important to make sure these products are under the same regulations as cigarettes and vaping devices. No sales to anyone under the age of 21.

Tobacco/nicotine 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 nicotine use are likely to become addicted, long-term users. In fact, 90% of adult smokers report they started as teens.

By closing these loopholes, you will make it harder for kids to get their hands on these highly addictive products. You will improve their health and the health of our state. You will eventually decrease the cost of nicotine related healthcare. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Local public health urges you to support HB 2528 for the health of our state. Thank you–

