

March 4, 2025

Senate Committee on Health Care

In support of SB 702

Chair Patterson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Emerson Hamlin, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA). ONA represents a diverse community of more than 21,000 nurses and health care professionals throughout Oregon. Together, we use our collective power to advocate for patients, nurses, and health care professionals, including working towards a more effective, affordable, and accessible healthcare system, better working conditions, and healthier communities.

According to the Oregon Tobacco Prevention and Education Program, tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death and disease in Oregon.¹ Tobacco use is also a major risk factor for developing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cancer, and arthritis, among other conditions that also shorten Oregonians' lives and significantly worsen their quality of life.² Worse, these consequences are not evenly distributed among all people: instead, members of marginalized communities disproportionately bear the burden, as tobacco companies have targeted their marketing towards our Black, African American, and LGBTQ+ community members.

Young people are also at increased risk: nearly 9 out of 10 adults who smoke started before the age of 18, and almost all started by age 26.³ Unfortunately, kids are increasingly targeted by tobacco companies via flavored tobacco products, which are often available in candy and fruit flavors. This is dangerous because nicotine poses a real risk to young people. Even short-term use in youth can harm brain development and can worsen attention, mood, and impulse control.⁴ Long-term use can result in chronic health conditions and premature death.

¹ *Oregon Tobacco Facts*. Oregon Health Authority : Oregon Tobacco Facts : Tobacco Prevention : State of Oregon. (n.d.). Retrieved February 13, 2025, from

[https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/preventionwellness/tobaccoprevention/pages/oregon-tobacco-facts.aspx#:~:text=However%2C%20tobacco%20use%20remains%20the,each%20year%20\(Table%202.2\).](https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/preventionwellness/tobaccoprevention/pages/oregon-tobacco-facts.aspx#:~:text=However%2C%20tobacco%20use%20remains%20the,each%20year%20(Table%202.2).)

² See above.

³ Surgeon General's Report on Smoking & Health (n.d.) *Smoking and Youth*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sgr/50th-anniversary/pdfs/fs_smoking_youth_508.pdf

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, November 10). *Quick facts on the risks of e-cigarettes for kids, teens, and young adults*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved February 13, 2025, from

https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/e-cigarettes/youth.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html

Passing SB 702, which will end the sale of flavored tobacco products across the state, is critical in reducing tobacco use and its associated health impacts. It is through passing measures like this one that we can protect the health of our kids and marginalized communities. ONA urges a yes vote. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,

Emerson Hamlin