



February 28, 2025

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

Re: Senate Bill 702 – Sale of Flavored Tobacco, Support

Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs Andersen and Breese-Iverson, and Members of the Committee. For the record, my name is William Miller. I'm Blackfeet and Cherokee and I serve as the Executive Director of the NAYA Action Fund, a Native-led organization that builds political power and advances advocacy for Native communities in Oregon and Washington. I appreciate the opportunity to provide written comments in support of SB 702, prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products.

SB 702 is a key step in protecting our youth, promoting public health, and honoring the traditional uses of tobacco within Native communities. We recognize that traditional tobacco, in its sacred and ceremonial forms, is integral to the spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional well-being of Native peoples. However, the use of ceremonial tobacco, particularly flavored products, has resulted in harmful health outcomes that require urgent public health intervention.

American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) individuals are the highest consumers of commercial tobacco in Oregon. According to the 2021 Oregon Tobacco Facts Report issued by the Oregon Health Authority, 39.6% of AI/AN individuals enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan use commercial tobacco, excluding ceremonial use. Additionally, 95% of adults who currently smoke began smoking before age 21, and flavored e-cigarettes are the most used tobacco product among Oregon teens, with over 10% of 11th graders reporting use in the past month. The tobacco industry deliberately targets youth with flavors like cool mint, watermelon ice, and cotton candy, a predatory practice that must be stopped. Nearly 90% of youth e-cigarette users consume flavored products, reinforcing the role these products play in addiction.

Banning flavored tobacco products is not just a public health measure – it's a step toward healing, health justice, and protecting the longevity of our people. Our Native community members are wisdom carriers, life bearers, and protectors of our culture. By passing SB 702, Oregon can lead the nation in prioritizing community health while safeguarding the health of future generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "William Miller", with a stylized flourish at the end.

William Miller
Executive Director