

Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Oregon State Senate
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for Senate Bill 702

Dear Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson, and members of the Committee:

I strongly encourage you to please support SB 702, ending the sale and distribution of flavored tobacco products. These products are designed to be appealing to kids, and vaping flavored nicotine can act as a gateway drug. E-cigarettes contain a much higher nicotine content than cigarettes, which makes them much more addictive, particularly to young users whose brains are particularly susceptible to addiction.

Once kids are comfortable with inhaling nicotine, it is often a quick and easy transition to vaping other substances, such as THC, the psychoactive component of cannabis. Not only has the transgressional barrier to vaping been crossed, but studies have shown that once the reward network in the brain has become dependent on an addictive substance, the person is more vulnerable to seeking out other substances that can similarly stimulate the brain's reward system network. In essence, it doesn't matter what the entry drug is. However, according to an NIH study entitled, "Nicotine Gateway Effects on Adolescent Substance Use," "adolescent exposure to nicotine influences the likelihood of other psychostimulant use, including cocaine and methamphetamine."¹

The study claims that teens who use e-cigarettes are more than three times more likely to use marijuana. "In addition to the enhanced use of alcohol and psychostimulants following early nicotine use, cigarette smoking in adolescents and young adults is associated with earlier onset of cannabis use, more frequent cannabis use, and a larger number of cannabis use disorder symptoms compared to those who did not smoke cigarettes."²

This knowledge is particularly irksome to me as a parent of a son with a cannabis-use disorder. Like many of his friends, my son started vaping flavored nicotine in middle school and then quickly transitioned to vaping flavored THC – which should also be banned! Now, seven years later, he is heavily dependent on nicotine, THC and alcohol. Having outgrown flavored vapes, he now smokes several packs of Marlboro's a week. So much for the claims of smoking cessation!

Please help stop the dreadful addiction cycle in Oregon by banning what has become the new entry drug for so many kids who are targeted by a predatory tobacco industry.

Thank you for your time,

Lee Stewart, Ph.D.

¹ Ren M, Lotfipour S. Nicotine Gateway Effects on Adolescent Substance Use. *West J Emerg Med.* 2019;20(5):696-709. Published 2019 Aug 20. doi:10.5811/westjem.2019.7.41661

² Ren M, Lotfipour S. Nicotine Gateway Effects on Adolescent Substance Use. *West J Emerg Med.* 2019;20(5):696-709. Published 2019 Aug 20. doi:10.5811/westjem.2019.7.41661