



Health Department

March 4, 2025

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

Re: Multnomah County's Support for SB 702

Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Committee, my name is Kirsten Aird and I am the Public Health Director for the Multnomah County Health Department. Thank you for the opportunity to provide a letter of support of Senate Bill 702 to prohibit the sale of menthol and other flavored tobacco products.

Multnomah County is voicing our support for Senate Bill 702. This bill, as originally written, provides our youth protection from the grip of commercial tobacco addiction and future disease and preventable death from nicotine. Tobacco and nicotine are the leading cause of preventable death in Multnomah County, Oregon, and the United States. The underlying causes of the 659 tobacco-related deaths in Multnomah County in 2022 are cancers, chronic lower respiratory diseases, diseases of the heart, stroke, and other illnesses.¹

The LGBTQ+ community has been targeted by the tobacco industry as well. Oregon has the highest percentage of LGBTQ+ residents of any state in the nation and they deserve to be protected from big tobacco companies.² Tobacco rates are 40% higher for the LGBTQ+ community. Youth in the LGBTQ+ community have double the rate of cigarette smoking and vape at higher percentages than their peers.³ This bill will allow us to further protect these vulnerable youth from predatory marketing campaigns.

In Oregon, 27 percent of Native Americans and Alaska Natives smoke cigarettes.⁴ Nationally, the rate of Native American or Alaska Native students that use tobacco products has increased.⁵ This has defied trends of students overall which has decreased over the same amount of time.

Youth tobacco use rate still remains too high with flavored tobacco being the major choice for use. Youth usage rates in Multnomah County for those in 8th grade between 2020 and 2022 increased significantly as shown in the following graph. Multnomah County is looking to state lawmakers to provide a safe

¹<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrljoiN2E4MWZiMTctYzU5Mi00OTUwLWlxMWMtNzFjZjIwMjIxMTE4liwidCI6IjY1OGU2M2U4LThkMzktNDk5Yy04ZjQ4LTEzYWVjOTQ1MmY0YyJ9&pageName=ReportSection>

²<https://www.oregonlive.com/living/2023/12/oregon-has-more-lgbtq-residents-per-capita-than-any-other-state-in-the-us-report.html>

³ <https://cancer-network.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Tobacco-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

⁴[https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/preventionwellness/tobaccoprevention/pages/oregon-tobacco-facts.aspx#:~:text=Race%20and%20ethnicity%20are%20also,e%20whites%20\(Figure%206.1\).](https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/preventionwellness/tobaccoprevention/pages/oregon-tobacco-facts.aspx#:~:text=Race%20and%20ethnicity%20are%20also,e%20whites%20(Figure%206.1).)

⁵<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2024/p1017-youth-tobacco-use.html#:~:text=In%20contrast%2C%20during%202023%2D2024,pouches%20increased%20among%20White%20students.>

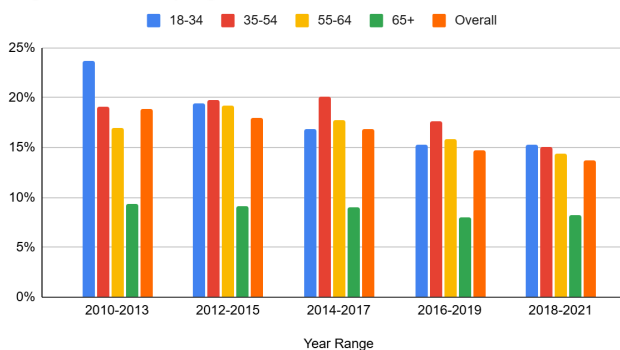
environment to help keep youth away from “iced” flavored tobacco and tobacco flavors like “unicorn puke” or “lucky charms.”

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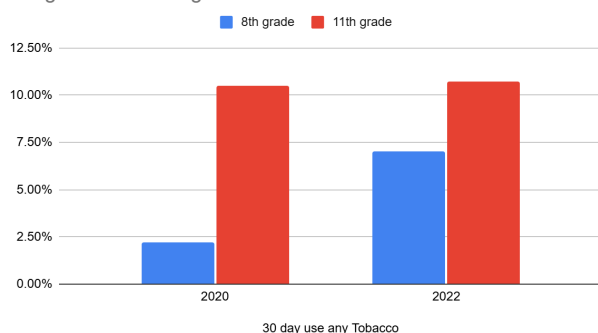
Limiting flavors works to keep youth from smoking. New York City; Providence, Rhode Island; and Lowell, Massachusetts have seen 5-8% decrease in youth use of tobacco products after removing flavors from local shelves.⁷

The tobacco industry can only survive by replacing the 480,000 smokers who die each year.⁸ Cigarette usage rates by age drop for 65+ cohorts due to lower life expectancy rates and rates of diseases such as cancer.⁹

Cigarette User By Age



8th grade and 11th grade



This is why we are so adamant about this issue, having ourselves adopted a local ordinance to eliminate menthol and other flavored tobacco sales in Multnomah County. While we wait for legal challenges to this policy to clear, we anticipate that the will of the people and our stand for health equity will prevail. While Washington County and Multnomah County youth will soon be protected from flavored addictive nicotine, children all over the rest of the State of Oregon will not be protected from the number one cause of death and disability.

The impacts of prohibiting flavored tobacco could not be more pronounced, and taking a side on this issue could not be more clear. We implore you to join more than 350 communities across the nation, as well as a handful of countries, tribal nations, and several U.S. states, in prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco in our communities.

The best method to keep Oregon healthy and to save on medical related expenses is prevention and cessation from tobacco. Voting for a menthol and other flavor ban will save your constituents’ lives. Multnomah County urges the legislature to vote yes on SB 702.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

⁶ Oregon Student Health Survey Data Portal for Multnomah County

⁷ Yang Y, Lindblom EN, Salloum RG, Ward KD. The impact of a comprehensive tobacco product flavor ban in San Francisco among young adults. *Addict Behav Rep.* 2020 Apr 1;11:100273.

⁸ Oregon Health Authority. “Economic Costs of Tobacco Use in Oregon”. Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Morbidity, and Economic Costs (SAMMEC) data, 2021. Unpublished data.

<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/preventionwellness/tobaccoprevention/pages/oregon-tobacco-facts.aspx>

⁹ Source Oregon Center for Health Statistics for Multnomah County.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kirsten Aird". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kirsten" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Aird".

Kirsten Aird, MPH
Public Health Director
Multnomah County Health Department