

March 3, 2025

TO: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health  
FROM: Ali King, Our Children Oregon  
SUBJECT: Support for SB 702

Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ali King and I am the Policy and Advocacy Director for Our Children Oregon (OCO), a statewide organization that advances equitable policies, data and research, and whole-child advocacy.

When I was in high school in the eighties, many of my friends smoked and most of them smoked menthol cigarettes because they tasted better than regular cigarettes. Concern over the uptick of teen smoking prompted almost two decades of successful public health initiatives, causing the high school smoking rate to decline by 70% between 1997 and 2015.

Then, due to the tobacco industry advertising targeting youth, as well as the availability of flavored products, youth use of e-cigarettes rapidly increased. The 2023 National Youth Tobacco Survey Report from the FDA and CDC shows that there has been a significant increase in tobacco use among middle school students. In 2023, tobacco use overall for middle school students increased by nearly 50% from 4.5% to 6.6%. Other research shows that the high level of nicotine in many e-cigarettes is extremely addictive. **The data also continues to show that youth are attracted to flavored products.** Nearly 90% of the youth survey respondents reported using flavored e-cigarette products, including mint and menthol. In addition, of the youth who smoke, 40.4% smoke menthol cigarettes. Flavored tobacco products remain the primary gateway for youth addiction.

As a parent of young adults, I saw this firsthand when my kids were in middle school and high school. Many of their friends did not consider vaping to be as harmful as smoking and were lured in with flavors like Cotton Candy, Watermelon Ice, and Cool Mint, which are meant to attract and hook new young users.

Thank you for the work you do to support Oregon's children and families. I **strongly urge you to help protect our kids and communities by ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Oregon by voting YES on SB 702.**

Sincerely,



Ali King, Policy and Advocacy Director, Our Children Oregon

View the [2025 Children's Agenda](#)