

Submitter: Matthew Bogle

Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB702

My name is Matthew and I work in a small tobacco business located in Beaverton that has been operating for nearly fifty years. I'm well aware the goal of legislation such as this is to eliminate tobacco use in the members of our community who are under the legal age of purchase. This is a fantastic idea and I wholly support it. Unfortunately going about doing so with a prohibition of part of the tobacco market would be ineffective therefore I urge you to vote no on SB702.

I would point out that in countries like Japan and Korea flavored cigarettes are still available and in more exotic flavors than are allowed in the USA such as peach and berry. Except their smoking rates among youth are 5%(2023) and 4.5%(2022) respectively. If flavored tobacco products were causing a statistically significant change in youth smoking rates one could reasonably assume these rates would be much higher than ours. This would lead to the conclusion that flavored tobacco does not play as big a role in youth smoking as it would appear to. Both of these countries have experienced declining rates of smoking in general, same as the USA, for the last thirty years or longer. Oregon itself has already experienced a significant drop of 88%(1996 - 2022, Oregon Health Authority) of use among reported 11th grade users and an almost 94%(1996 - 2022, Oregon Health Authority) for reported 8th grade users. Even e-cigarette use has dropped for both of these groups since their peaks by over 50%(8th:11.8 to 4.7, 11th:23.4 to 10.8 Oregon Health Authority). Please note the year use spiked for 11th grade users was 2019, when the USA was facing an unprecedented amount of illegal cannabis vaping products which could have skewed the data.

The spike for 11th grade users leads to another issue that concerns me: the creation of a black market. As our government learned with the prohibition of goods, such as with alcohol, an economic void is created which can be filled with black market products. This leads to three issues that come to mind: sellers who pay no mind to the age of their purchasers, unregulated and therefore potentially dangerous products, and an overall loss of tax revenue for the state. Elements which run black markets tend to be of the unscrupulous variety and it could be assumed they would not care about the age of who they are selling to so long as they are able to afford the product. We also run in to the issue of knock off or counterfeit brands being created which could hold any manner of material or chemical which could have a catastrophic effect on the health of people such as we saw with the illegal vapes containing vitamin e acetate. Lastly all of the revenue these black markets would be generating would go untaxed thereby causing the state to experience a loss in overall revenue while we face a tentative 37 billion dollar budget for the next two years as well as the costs incurred to enforced such a bill.

Personally I believe prevention comes from two places: the classroom and at home. Our

children should be given all the information we can possibly pass on to them when it comes to smoking. Not a single child should go through our education system without knowing all the dangers that come with becoming a smoker. I also think parents should have a talk with their children about tobacco. A relative who uses tobacco can have a tremendous influence on young people and they should know it is a decision that should not be made lightly or prematurely. However if people reach the legal age and still wish to smoke there really is only one thing we can do: let them make their own decisions. Good or bad we as human beings have the autonomy to make our own choices and face the consequences of those actions. Our government is supposed to govern, not make all of our life decisions for us.

The final thing I'd like to touch on is this legislation is simply too broad. The definition of a "characterizing flavor" in the bill makes it sound like many of the naturally occurring flavors found in cigars and pipe tobaccos would no longer be allowed under this bill. As a tiny business of just four people losing the vast majority of our products would put us and very well many other small stores completely out of business. Not to mention the global economic impact this can have on manufacturers in Europe, the farmers and manufacturers here in the USA and many towns in Central America built around cigar factories. Bills like these have far reaching consequences for the livelihood of thousands around the globe who make their living growing, processing and selling these products.

Once again I urge you to vote no on SB702.