



VANESSA CORNWALL

Intergovernmental Relations Officer
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DATE: March 4, 2025
TO: Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
FROM: Vanessa Cornwall, Lane County Intergovernmental Relations Officer
RE: SB 702, Relating to Public Health

Dear Chair Reynolds, Co-Chairs Anderson and Gorsek, and Members of the Committee:

Lane County strongly supports SB 702, which prohibits the sale of flavored tobacco and inhalant delivery system products in Oregon. Various Lane County Agencies recognize the critical role this legislation plays in protecting the health of our residents, particularly our youth, from the harmful effects of nicotine addiction and tobacco use.

Despite progress in tobacco prevention, youth tobacco use remains high, with flavored tobacco products being the primary choice for initiation. Between 2020 and 2022, 67% of Lane County 11th graders who used tobacco products for the first time reported using e-cigarettes or other vaping products. The tobacco industry has a long history of targeting children with candy-like flavors such as Cotton Candy, Watermelon Ice, and Cool Mint—flavors that mask the dangers of nicotine and create lifelong addiction.

A comprehensive approach is essential to effectively addressing flavored tobacco products. Exempting menthol cigarettes would create a two-tiered system of public health inequality—disproportionately protecting predominantly white communities where e-cigarettes are more popular, while neglecting youth in Black, Latino, and LGBTQ+ communities where menthol tobacco use is more prevalent. Menthol use is disproportionately common among youth, female smokers, LGBTQ+ individuals, those with mental illness, and racial and ethnic minorities, especially Black smokers—88.5% of whom use menthol cigarettes.

In addition to their health risks, vape pens contain two significant items of concern: lithium batteries and nicotine.

1. When damaged batteries encounter moisture in the air, they can ignite. Lane County has already experienced combustion incidents at our local waste haulers, the Lane County Hazardous Waste Facility, Lane County Waste Management Trailers, and the landfill. These incidents are not only dangerous, but also costly to mitigate. Lane County staff from these facilities have testified to these concerns in support of HB 2062, the battery recycling bill.
2. Nicotine is classified as an acutely toxic and hazardous substance, with strict limits on disposal and storage at 2.2 lbs. Law enforcement agencies and schools that collect confiscated vape pens are now considered the waste “generator” and are responsible for proper disposal. The challenge for these agencies is that the weight of the vape, including its case and battery, counts toward the disposal limit, making compliance difficult. Currently, there is no clear, economical, or safe disposal pathway for these devices.



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SB 702 upholds the ability for local governments to implement more stringent regulations on tobacco sales, ensuring that communities can continue to take proactive measures to protect public health. Lane County has historically supported policies that reduce youth access to harmful substances, including raising the tobacco purchase age to 21 and restricting tobacco retail licensing. This bill aligns with our ongoing efforts to create healthier environments for all residents

The passage of this bill, eliminating flavored tobacco and inhalant delivery system products will save lives, reduce healthcare costs, and address the ever growing environmental hazards posed by disposable vape pens.

ELECTRONICALLY SUBMITTED BY VANESSA CORNWALL, LANE COUNTY
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS OFFICER