



Representative Hoa Nguyen  
Oregon House District 48

SB 702 - BAN ON FLAVORED TOBACCO PRODUCTS

**3/4 Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health**

As the State Representative for House District 48, which includes outer Southeast Portland and North Clackamas County, I strongly support SB 702, a bill that would ban the sale of flavored tobacco products in Oregon.

As both an educator and an advocate, I have seen firsthand the harmful effects of tobacco use on our youth. Nicotine addiction disrupts students' lives, affecting their health, academic performance, and future opportunities. Flavored tobacco products, including candy-flavored e-cigarettes, minty menthol cigarettes, and dessert-flavored little cigars, are deliberately designed to attract young people and hook them into a lifelong addiction. We cannot allow this predatory industry to continue targeting our children.

The health consequences of tobacco use are devastating and well-documented. In 2022, the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) reported 8,600 tobacco-related deaths in our state due to conditions such as cancer, stroke, heart disease, and chronic respiratory problems. Additionally, tobacco use costs Oregon an estimated \$2.9 billion annually in medical expenses and lost productivity, placing a significant financial burden on our healthcare system and economy.

Despite these well-known dangers, Big Tobacco continues to market products specifically designed to appeal to kids. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 90% of youth who use e-cigarettes choose flavored products. Flavors like bubblegum, cotton candy, and fruit are not meant for adult smokers trying to quit—they are designed to attract new, young users who are more susceptible to addiction.

One of the most insidious tactics used by the tobacco industry is the continued promotion of menthol cigarettes, which are particularly harmful to public health. Menthol's cooling effect makes it easier for young users to inhale, leading to deeper nicotine absorption and stronger addiction. Studies show that menthol cigarettes are disproportionately marketed to Black communities, contributing to significant health disparities. According to the FDA, 85% of Black smokers use menthol cigarettes, compared to 29% of white smokers. By banning flavored tobacco products, including menthol, Oregon can take a critical step toward reducing these inequities and protecting vulnerable communities.

The rise in flavored e-cigarette use among teens is alarming. The 2023 National Youth Tobacco Survey found that more than 2.1 million U.S. middle and high school students reported using e-cigarettes, with 81% of them choosing flavored products.

Youth who use flavored e-cigarettes are at a much higher risk of transitioning to traditional cigarette smoking. A study published in JAMA Pediatrics found that young people who use e-cigarettes are four times more likely to start smoking cigarettes compared to those who never vaped. The long-term consequences of this addiction are clear—higher risks of lung disease, heart conditions, and other chronic illnesses that could have been prevented.

This is not just a public health issue—it is a moral issue. By allowing flavored tobacco products to remain on the market, we are failing to protect the next generation from an industry that profits off addiction, disease, and premature death. The tobacco industry has spent decades using deceptive marketing tactics to attract young people, and it is our responsibility to put a stop to it.

By passing SB 702, Oregon can:

- ✔ Reduce youth tobacco and e-cigarette use. States like California and Massachusetts have already implemented similar bans, resulting in significant declines in youth tobacco use.
- ✔ Improve public health and save lives. Banning flavored tobacco

products will prevent addiction before it starts, leading to lower smoking rates and fewer tobacco-related illnesses in the long run.

✔ Protect marginalized communities. Ending the sale of menthol cigarettes will help address racial health disparities caused by decades of targeted marketing.

Oregon has the opportunity to lead on this issue and set an example for other states. We cannot allow the profits of Big Tobacco to come before the health and well-being of our kids.

I urge my colleagues in the Legislature to support SB 702 and take a stand against the tobacco industry's exploitation of our youth. Together, we can make a difference and build a healthier future for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your time and consideration.