



MEMORANDUM

To: Sen. Lisa Reynolds, Chair, Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Sen. Dick Anderson, Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

Members of the Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

From: David Cosgrove, MD

Date: March 4, 2025

Re: OMA Comments on SB 702

As an oncologist practicing in Oregon. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 702, which seeks to prohibit the sale of flavored tobacco products and protect our youth from the devastating effects of nicotine addiction. I grew up in Ireland and completed my early medical training there, at a time when tobacco use was even more widespread than what we see today. Having practiced in the Pacific Northwest for over 10 years, I am seeing a significant increase in cancer incidence in our younger patient population, almost certainly linked to environmental factors.

As a physician specializing in cancer treatment, I witness firsthand the long-term consequences of tobacco use. Tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Oregon, contributing to over 8,000 deaths annually, many cancer-related. The introduction of flavored tobacco products has only worsened this crisis by making these harmful substances more appealing to young people. There is a distinct intersection between smoking, vaping and flavored products. Almost 90% of smokers start before the age of 18. Roughly half of all youth who are smokers started with vape. Studies show that more than 80% of youth tobacco users start with flavored products and nearly 90% of youth who use e-cigarettes prefer flavored options. These statistics highlight the direct role that flavors play in initiating and sustaining addiction. The problem is now so widespread that a recent survey by the National Education Association found that 9 in 10 teachers report vaping is disrupting the learning environment. Flavored products are difficult for

teachers and special detectors to identify as tobacco, essentially allowing for more widespread use and opening additional pathways to addiction.

The tobacco industry spends over \$100 million a year promoting harmful products. The industry has a well-documented history of targeting children with flavors like Cotton Candy, Watermelon Ice, and Cool Mint—designed to mask the harshness of nicotine and create a false sense of limited harm. Brain development continues into the mid-20s and young users are drawn into addiction before fully understanding the long-term risks, increasing their likelihood of developing serious health conditions, including lung cancer, other malignancies, cardiovascular disease, and chronic respiratory illnesses.

By passing SB 702, we have an opportunity to eliminate a major gateway to nicotine addiction and prioritize the health of future generations over the profits of the tobacco industry. Restricting flavored tobacco sales will help prevent young Oregonians from becoming lifelong tobacco users, reducing the burden of tobacco-related diseases on our healthcare system.

As an oncologist, I strongly urge the legislature to support SB 702. Protecting our youth from a lifetime of addiction is a public health imperative, and will reduce many negative health impacts on our whole community. I appreciate your time and consideration, and I am happy to serve as a resource for further discussion on this critical issue.