

Submitter: Erin Lange
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB702

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 702

As a parent of two teens, a dentist and a wife of a public school employee, I am concerned about flavored tobacco use among children. I've seen young adults using tobacco and it worries me because early use often leads to a lifetime of addiction. I'm not a pulmonary expert or a policy expert or an expert on the tobacco industry. I was at the hearing on March 4 but was unable to have a turn to speak. I believe it would have been helpful to have some average community members and educators speak in support, not just medical experts. My husband has many stories of the frequency with which he confiscates vaping devices at the middle school in which he works. Severe opponents of the bill argued that children are already legally protected from tobacco products. I have heard from my husband how those laws are failing our kids.

Flavored cigarettes have been banned for more than 15 years. If given a chance, I would have asked the market owners if their businesses were significantly impacted when most flavors of cigarettes were banned. I would guess there was an immediate impact that, ultimately, they worked through. I also would have asked if a black market in flavored cigarettes suddenly emerged/increased. It seems it did not. The tobacco industry has evolved to skirt regulations aimed at protecting kids. We need to evolve as well.

The argument that a loss of tax revenue, collected at the cost of our children's health, is a valid opposition is absurd. We can do better than that. My husband jokingly reminds me that our two teenaged children still have smooth brains. Those brains deserve our protection.

I appreciate your consideration of my testimony in support of Senate Bill 702 and, as a lifelong Oregonian, a concerned mother, and a constituent, I strongly urge you to pass it. We know the damage tobacco inflicts – we must take action whenever we can to protect our kids, and truly all Oregonians, from these harmful products.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Erin Lange