



Support for SB 702

Testimony in support of a ban on flavored tobacco products

Chair Reynolds, Vice-chair Anderson and Committee members

I'm Lisa Kensel, President of Oregon PTA and I am writing in support of SB 702.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Oregon, killing over 8,000 people annually and costing \$5.7 billion every year in medical expenses and lost productivity.¹ These numbers are staggering, yet behind them are real lives—children, parents, and friends—who suffer because of the tobacco industry's aggressive targeting and harmful products.

The burden of tobacco is not felt equally. Communities with lower incomes, people of color, and those experiencing systemic oppression are disproportionately impacted. Youth are particularly vulnerable. Flavored tobacco products, often marketed with names like Cotton Candy and Cool Mint, are deliberately designed to attract and hook young users. Over 93% of Oregon stores that sell tobacco carry flavored products, making them widely accessible to youth. More than half of young tobacco users in our state report using flavored products, underscoring the critical link between flavors and tobacco initiation.

Research shows that flavored tobacco is a gateway to lifelong nicotine addiction, with over 90% of adult smokers starting before the age of 21.¹ Eliminating the sale of flavored products is a necessary step to disrupt this cycle. Communities across Oregon are calling for this change, recognizing that our children deserve a future free from the harm of tobacco addiction.

This legislation offers the opportunity to address these inequities, save lives, and reduce the enormous financial and social toll tobacco takes on Oregon. I urge you to support a comprehensive ban on flavored tobacco products. By doing so, you will protect our children, support vulnerable communities, and make a bold statement against the harmful influence of Big Tobacco.

Thank you for your time and dedication to this issue. Together, we can safeguard the health of Oregon's youth and build a healthier future for all Oregonians.

Please vote yes on SB 702. Thank you.

Lisa Kensel, President, Oregon PTA

¹ <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PREVENTIONWELLNESS/TOBACCPREVENTION/Pages/oregon-tobacco-facts.aspx>