

Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Oregon State Senate 900 Court St. NE Salem, Oregon 97301
RE: Support for Senate Bill 702

March 5, 2025

Dear Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson, and members of the Committee:

My name is Natalie Nicklas, and I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 702, which would end the sale of flavored tobacco products in Oregon. As a concerned Oregon resident, I have seen firsthand the harm that flavored tobacco causes in our communities, particularly among youth and marginalized populations.

Flavored tobacco is a direct driver of youth initiation and addiction. The tobacco industry has long used flavors like menthol, fruit, and candy to hook new users, knowing that these products mask the harshness of tobacco and make it easier to start—and harder to quit. Research shows that nearly 85% of youth who use tobacco start with a flavored product, and Oregon is no exception. Without action, the next generation will continue to be targeted by these addictive and harmful products.

Beyond youth, flavored tobacco, especially menthol, has been used to disproportionately harm Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color. These targeted marketing tactics have led to higher addiction rates and worse health outcomes in historically marginalized groups, contributing to preventable diseases and health inequities.

Ending the sale of flavored tobacco is a proven public health strategy. States and cities that have taken this step have seen significant declines in youth use without harming small businesses—many of which successfully transition to selling healthier alternatives. As we work to support local retailers in diversifying their product offerings, policies like SB 702 ensure that we prioritize health while providing pathways for economic transition.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 702 and take a critical step toward protecting Oregon's youth and communities from the predatory practices of the tobacco industry. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Natalie Nicklas