



Board of Commissioners

Office: (541) 766-6800
Fax: (541) 766-6893

4500 SW Research Way
P. O. Box 3020
Corvallis, OR 97339

bentoncountyor.gov

March 5, 2025

Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Reynolds and Members of the Senate Early Childhood and Behavioral Health Committee:

The Benton County Board of Commissioners considers the public's health and safety to be a top priority. We support Senate Bill 702 and recently passed a resolution strongly encouraging the Oregon Legislature to pass legislation ending the sale of flavored tobacco products and inhalant delivery system products. The resolution has been submitted for the record.

Two thirds of Oregon youth who use tobacco use flavored products, compared to a quarter of older adults who use tobacco. The tobacco industry's use of candy flavors like bubblegum, blue raspberry, root beer, and minty menthol entices consumers, especially youth, beginning a lifetime of addiction. Prohibiting flavor tobacco products and inhalant delivery system products can benefit public health by reducing initiation among youth and promoting cessation among adults.

In addition to Benton County's Ending the Sale of Flavored Tobacco resolution, the Board of Commissioners has taken steps to protect the community's health by reducing exposure and access to tobacco and nicotine products by:

- Strengthening our local smokefree workplace law beyond Oregon law to prohibit smoking in vape shops, smoke shops, and hookah lounges; and
- Expanding our local tobacco retail license requirements to prohibit issuance of a license to a tobacco retailer at a location within 1,000 feet of a school or within 1,000 feet of another tobacco retailer.

Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

Re: Senate Bill 702


March 5, 2025

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The Benton County Board of Commissioners strongly urges the Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health to support this important bill.

Sincerely,

BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Nancy Wyse, Chair



Pat Malone, Vice Chair



Gabe Shepherd, Commissioner

BOC/mjk

Enclosure: Resolution No. R2024-022

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FOR THE STATE OF OREGON, COUNTY OF BENTON**

**In the Matter of Supporting Ending the Sale of)
Flavored Tobacco Products and Protecting) **RESOLUTION No. R2024-022**
Youth from a Lifetime of Nicotine Addiction)**

WHEREAS two thirds of Oregon youth who use tobacco use flavored products, compared to a quarter of older adults who use tobacco, thus beginning a lifetime of addiction¹; and

The tobacco industry’s use of candy flavors like bubblegum, blue raspberry, root beer, and minty menthol entices generations of consumers – especially children, students, and communities of color – and hooks them on the massive amount of nicotine delivered by their tobacco products²; and

The tobacco industry spends millions on lobbying so retailers can continue selling candy-flavored products commercialized to youth³; and

Nine out of 10 adults who smoke report that they started by the age of 18, and in Oregon, 10.8% of 11th grade students use e-cigarettes⁴, and 5,000 youth under 18 try cigarettes for the first time each year; and

Menthol cigarettes have caused substantial harm to public health, particularly to Black Americans. For more than 60 years, the tobacco industry has targeted Black Americans with marketing and price promotions for menthol cigarettes, and as a result, 85% of Black Americans who smoke use menthol cigarettes⁵; and

A 2020 Surgeon General report concluded that, “Prohibiting flavors, including menthol, in tobacco products can benefit public health by reducing initiation among young people and promoting cessation among adults”⁶; and

The FDA prohibits cigarettes from having candy, fruit, and spice as their characterizing flavors⁷, because these flavors make tobacco products especially appealing to youth, and can lead to a lifetime of tobacco addiction; and

¹ Oregon Health Authority Public Health Division, Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Section. Oregon tobacco facts. Available at: <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/preventionwellness/tobaccoprevention/pages/oregon-tobacco-facts.aspx>

² <https://www.doj.state.or.us/media-home/news-media-releases/oregon-leads-438-million-agreement-with-juul-labs/>

³ <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/congressional-testimony/epidemic-continues-youth-vaping-america-06232021>

⁴ <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/release/2021-national-survey-drug-use-and-health-nsduh-releases>

⁵ CDC, “Current Cigarette Smoking Among Adults—United States, 2005-2015,” Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report, 65(44): 1205-1211, November 11, 2016, http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6544a2.htm?s_cid=mm6544a2_w

⁶ Smoking Cessation: A Report of the Surgeon General – Key Findings, <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/tobacco/2020-cessation-sgr-factsheet-key-findings/index.html>

⁷ <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/rules-regulations-and-guidance/family-smoking-prevention-and-tobacco-control-act-overview>

Tobacco use kills over 8,000 Oregonians annually, costing almost \$5.7 billion in medical expenses and lost productivity⁸, and \$373.6 million in annual Medicaid costs⁹; and

Oregon is positioned to be a national leader, as there are only seven states and 344 U.S. jurisdictions which prohibit flavored tobacco sales so far.¹⁰ During the 2023 legislative sessions, Vermont (H204), Washington (SB 5239), Maryland (SB 259), Hawaii (HB 551), New Mexico (HB 0094), New York (A 3907), New Jersey (A 4120) and Indiana (HB 1133) introduced legislation to prohibit the sale of flavored tobacco products, including menthol-flavored cigarettes. This level of policy intervention has momentum, is based on a demonstrated and shared need, and is quickly becoming a legislative priority across the country.

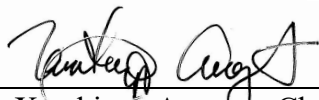
THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that:

- The Benton County Board of Commissioners strongly encourages the Oregon Legislature to pass legislation ending the sale of flavored tobacco products, including menthol; and
- We must act immediately to protect youth and targeted communities from the tobacco industry's candy-flavored and minty-menthol tobacco used to lure young people into a lifetime of addiction.

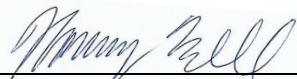
Adopted this 6th day of August, 2024.

Signed this 6th day of August, 2024.

BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



Xanthippe Augetot, Chair



Nancy Wyse, Vice Chair



Pat Malone, Commissioner

⁸ <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/preventionwellness/tobaccoprevention/pages/oregon-tobacco-facts.aspx#s2>

⁹ <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/oregon>

¹⁰ https://truthinitiative.org/sites/default/files/media/files/2022/01/Q3%202021%20draft_FINAL-Sept302021.pdf

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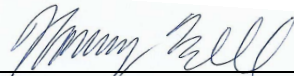
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