



Oregon Latino Health Coalition

Health and wellness through equity and justice

Oregon Latino Health Coalition
245 SW Bancroft Street, Suite E
Portland, OR 97239

March 4, 2025

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

My name is Melissa Belmontes and I am the Latino Health Policy & Advocacy Coordinator at Oregon Latino Health Coalition. As a statewide health advocacy organization, our mission is to advance the health of Latinos in Oregon through policy, advocacy, and prevention. I write to you in support of the passage of Senate bill 702 which will protect our children and communities by ending the sale of flavored commercial tobacco products in Oregon.

The Oregon Latino Health Coalition is a partner with the Oregon Health Authority's Tobacco Prevention and Education Program. Our organization's tobacco prevention program addresses the ongoing impacts of commercial tobacco use in the Latino community in a few ways. For instance, we develop and implement workshops in Spanish focused on prevention and education of commercial tobacco use in the Latino community. Also, we collaborate across the state with Community Based Organizations, health departments, and other health equity champions to help distribute statewide culturally and linguistically specific tobacco prevention information and resources. These efforts aim to advance local and statewide tobacco prevention policies and recommendations that address Latino health disparities.

Our team has learned many things from the community-centered work we do in the Latino community. For example, while parents in our workshops were familiar with the harms of cigarettes, many were shocked to discover the high dosage of nicotine and the wide variety of flavors and electronic devices on the market. Many parents were unaware that a product that looked like a USB drive, smelled and tasted like peaches could be so harmful to our health.

In addition, the youth that participated in our workshops attributed the use of flavored tobacco products as coping mechanisms for dealing with their stress and anxiety. Overall, nearly one in ten Hispanic high school students are current users of any



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tobacco products¹ with e-cigarettes being the most common used among Hispanic high school students. While flavored tobacco products may be appealing, they are highly addictive, they cause harm to adolescent brain development, and have serious long-term health conditions. We do not want youth to be long-term clients of tobacco companies, we want them to live long and fruitful lives without the harms of these products.

Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products is a reasonable step to take to protect the health of Oregon kids. The Oregon Latino Health Coalition urges you to invest in the well-being of our communities and support Senate Bill 702.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Melissa Belmontes
Policy and Advocacy Coordinator

¹Jamal A, et al. "Tobacco Product Use Among Middle and High School Students — National Youth Tobacco Survey, United States, 2024." MMWR 73(41):917–924, October 17, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7341a2.htm>.