

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

Senate.Bill.702

My name is Ben Brewer and I am submitting testimony in opposition of SB 702. Prohibiting the sale of flavored nicotine products, like chewing tobacco, will not protect young people from using flavored vape products. Many youth have been getting their vapes illegally so banning the sale of these products will not stop consumption but will harm adults who are trying to stop using cigarettes.

Here is a little of my story. I used to smoke cigarettes and they were impacting my family, my environment, my health, and many plants on the patio I'd stick my buds in. I tried to quit cold turkey after my kid was old enough to ask questions because I did not want him to think it was okay or cool to smoke because dad did it and after a few days I just came right back to smoking cigarettes even more than before. The thing that worked was shifting over to flavored chewing tobacco. Many benefits to my life and my house plants came after quitting cigarettes. I know many others who have also stopped smoking cigarettes with this method, it is healthier and safer for our environment.

I think Oregon is doing a good job in helping youth stay away from using nicotine and should consider reinforcing this work instead of passing SB 702. Oregon has restricted tobacco retail licensing, which is helping with access and proximity to schools. Since the passage of Tobacco 21 in 2019 there has been a huge drop in underage tobacco use. According to the Oregon Health Authority Student Health Survey and Truth Initiative 2023, Oregon's 11th grader's tobacco use was at 21.4% in 2017 and in 2022 that number dropped to 6.9%. T21 worked! These are the laws that are protecting our youth and efforts should be made to enforce these laws, not punish adults.

I urge the committee to shift their focus on supporting and enforcing the work already in place to protect youth from using tobacco. Data shows these initiatives are working so if more needs to be done, like enforcement of sale to those under 21, mandatory ID scanners for sale, increased fines for selling to or providing product to someone under 21, required tobacco retailer training and education, or protecting the environment from combustible battery incidents from vapes then we need HB 2062 on battery recycling and a completely different bill that does not target adults. Additionally, flavor bans in other states have proven this policy approach as ineffective to addressing youth tobacco use. In California, Washington D.C., and

Massachusetts, youth vaping increased post-ban and in California the ban allowed for a black market economy to thrive, making it “cooler” for kids who can get vapes to vape, which promotes illicit activity in youth. Don’t put our youth in danger of learning what else a black market and participating in illegal activity has to offer. Please do not let SB 702 pass, this is not the way.