

Hello Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Muhsin Farah, I'm 16 years old, and I both attend school and live in Portland, Oregon. I am here today as a youth ambassador for Upstream Public Health and tobacco free coalition of Oregon to state my support for Senate Bill 702, which would end the sale of flavored tobacco products.

This issue is deeply personal to me because I have seen firsthand how flavored tobacco traps young people in addiction. One of my closest friends started vaping when we were younger. It didn't seem like a big deal at first, just a few puffs of something that smelled like mango or cotton candy. He thought it was harmless. We all did. But over time, it became something he couldn't go without. I watched as he went from casually vaping to needing it first thing in the morning, in between classes, and even when we were just hanging out. He tried to quit multiple times, but the cravings always pulled him back.

It was heartbreaking to see someone I cared about struggle with something that he never would have touched if not for the sweet flavors that made it seem fun and harmless. The truth is, these products like vape and hookah aren't designed for adults trying to quit smoking, they're designed to hook young people. The tobacco industry knows that if they can get us to start young, we're more likely to become lifelong customers.

In my community specifically, I have also seen how Hookah has plagued our young muslim people. Hookah and vape are the common usages of commercial tobacco products that I've seen young Muslim people who look like me use. There are many myths of hookah usage in my community like that it's "halal because the water filters out the toxins and tobacco", some young people also believe that they're just smoking water or coals but not tobacco. Hookah is also commonly smoked indoors so adults who smoke in the house but not in front of kids are

still putting their kids in harm's way due to second and third hand smoke which stays in couches, curtains and other furniture.

This is why Senate Bill 702 matters. If flavored tobacco had been banned years ago, my friend, and so many others like him, might not be struggling with addiction today. This bill is about protecting the next generation from going through what he did.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 702 and take a stand against these predatory tactics. Oregon's youth deserve better. Thank you for your time.