

Testimony

Greetings Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson, and esteemed members of the committee. My name is Duresa, and I am representing Upstream Public Health and the Tobacco Free Coalition of Oregon. I am here today to express my support of Senate Bill 702, which aims to ban the sale of flavored commercial tobacco products.

Being a sophomore in Reynolds high school, I've seen the way flavored tobacco has become trendy among a lot of social circles in my school. Kids believe it is fun because it tastes like cotton candy or watermelon and the vape devices have a sleek and cool design that often entices youth to start using – not to mention some of these vapes have games on them. The same applies to Hookah which is the most common use of tobacco products in the African Muslim community. From my experience I've seen how quickly vape and hookah usage can get out of hand.

I have seen friends who started consuming these products find themselves addicted to nicotine and not being able to regulate their emotions without it. For others, it has become something they use on a daily basis, which started as experimentation or were offered by their peers. These products put a lot of stress not only on the users but the people around them like friends, teachers, and family. I hate having to walk in my school bathroom and smell the stench of flavored vape products, I hate losing friendships to tobacco products, and I hate how people lose their life to nicotine and other drugs as it can be a gateway drug for many other substances.

The worst thing is how normal it has become today. I see people hiding vapes in bathrooms or hallways, thinking that because it is flavored, it's not that bad. But it is still extremely dangerous due to the lithium battery, the plastics, and metal particles that can enter your lungs. Some of my friends have even shunned those who use it, out of fear of being influenced.

In short, flavored tobacco commercial tobacco products are purposefully used to appeal to young people who look like me. By saying yes to Senate Bill 702 we can address the unhealthy, predatory, and addictive nature of tobacco products. I urge you to pass this bill as it will support us young people to be aware of the risks and assist our peers in making the correct decisions.