

To: Senate Committee on Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

Meeting date: March 4, 2025 1p

In support of SB 702



**UPSTREAM
PUBLIC HEALTH**

Dear Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lillie Manvel and I am the Executive Director of Upstream Public Health, a non-profit based in Salem that works throughout the state to advance policies to prevent chronic disease and end health disparities.

I am writing today in **support** of SB 702 which would ban the sale of all flavored commercial tobacco and nicotine products, for all ages and all locations in Oregon with no exceptions.

Upstream's primary focus in tobacco advocacy is to end the sale of commercial menthol cigarettes. **Every year, more than 40,000 Black people die from tobacco-related illnesses in the US.** Why? Since the 1950s, **Big Tobacco has aggressively marketed and targeted Black people with menthol advertising.** In addition newspaper and magazine advertisements, tobacco ads and retail promotions are more prevalent in stores located in predominantly Black neighborhoods and low-priced menthol in these areas make buying them more appealing to price-sensitive youth. The results could not be better for Big Tobacco: 85% of Black smokers smoke menthol, compared to 29% of white smokers. Adding insult to injury, **menthol cigarettes are harder to quit than non-flavored cigarettes.**

I am a former smoker. My personal journey with tobacco began early, starting in utero and again as a middle-schooler when I began sneaking cigarettes from family members, smoking them with my friends who were up to the same tricks. **I bought my first pack of cigarettes before I turned 18.** I turn 50 this year and kids are still picking up their nicotine habits the same way I did. **This is not accidental.**

Today, nearly every adult who smokes reports using tobacco before they could legally purchase it. From my story and the story of countless others, it is apparent that age restrictions have never truly mattered to the tobacco industry. **Ending the sale of the flavors and products that are intentionally designed to be attractive to youth will be another important step** toward ending tobacco's hold on Oregonians. **Several states and over 300 communities in the U.S. have done this already,** we can do it here, too.

Thank you, Chair Reynolds, Vice-Chair Anderson and committee members for your leadership on nicotine use prevention. We hope Oregon can join the other states that have made this critical step toward a tobacco-free future, proudly showing that Oregon values health over special interests.

Thank you for your service to Oregon.

Lillie Manvel, MPH

Executive Director, Upstream Public Health

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