



To: Senate Committee On Early Childhood and Behavioral Health

Re: Support SB 702

Date: 3/4/2025

Latino Network was founded in 1996 by advocates for the needs of the growing Latinx community in Multnomah County. Since then, these grassroots beginnings have evolved into a continuum of services that support Latinx individuals, families, and communities. Our programs currently focus on education, advocacy & leadership, health & wellness, economic justice, youth empowerment & violence prevention, and arts & culture, engaging nearly 11,000 community members throughout Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington Counties in the last year. We are the leading culturally-specific provider for Latinx youth, parent, and family services in the Portland area with the goal of serving the nearly 19% of Oregon's population who identify as Latinx or Hispanic.

Latino Network currently provides direct services to youth and families in Senate Districts 13-15 and 19-25 and House Districts 25, 28, 29, 37, 40 and 42-50.

The passage of Senate Bill 702 is a critical step in protecting Oregon's youth—particularly those in Hispanic and Latino communities—from the harmful and predatory tactics of the tobacco industry. Flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes and fruit- and candy-flavored e-cigarettes, are specifically designed to appeal to young people, making it easier for them to start using and harder to quit. Nearly 90% of youth who use e-cigarettes report using flavored products¹.

For decades, the tobacco industry has disproportionately targeted Hispanic and Latino communities through culturally tailored advertising, sponsorships, and product placement². As a result, 50% of Hispanic adults who smoke use menthol cigarettes, a product known to increase addiction and decrease quit rates³. This targeted marketing has contributed to severe health disparities—lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among Hispanic men and the second leading cause among Hispanic women⁴. Additionally, limited access to healthcare and cessation resources has made it even more difficult for those who want to quit, with fewer than 30% of Hispanic smokers using proven cessation treatments.

In Oregon, 5,500 people die from smoking-related illnesses each year⁵. With nearly 95%

¹ Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Student Health Survey.

² Tobacco Use and Hispanics, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

³ Delnevo, CD, et al., "Banning Menthol Cigarettes: A Social Justice Issue Long Overdue".

⁴ American Cancer Society, Cancer Facts & Figures for Hispanic/Latino People.

⁵ VanFrank B, et al., "Adult Smoking Cessation — United States, 2022".



of adult smokers started before the age of 21⁶, it is clear that prevention efforts must focus on stopping tobacco use before it starts. The tobacco industry knows this, which is why it continues to push flavored products that are especially appealing to young people and communities of color.

Passing SB 702 would send a clear message that Oregon prioritizes the health and well-being of all its residents, particularly communities that have long been exploited by the tobacco industry. Ending the sale of flavored tobacco products will help prevent addiction, protect youth from long-term health consequences, and reduce tobacco-related health disparities.

The concern of flavored vapes is shared by many Latinx families in Oregon. A community health worker from Latino Network staff member had this to say about the impacts of flavor tobacco:

“I’ve seen firsthand how unaware many are of the variety of flavored vaping devices available to their kids. Parents have shared stories of finding vaping devices designed to look like highlighters, pens, and even small phones—products intentionally made to be deceptive and easy to hide. Their biggest fear is that their kids could be using these products and harming their health without them even knowing. Some parents have even told me that their kids try to convince them that flavored vaping is harmless, saying, “It’s just water vapor,” and dismissing their concerns as outdated. This intentional deception is unacceptable.

Oregon lawmakers have an opportunity to take a stand against an industry that profits from addiction and poor health outcomes. A senate Bill 702 is a necessary measure to create a healthier future for Oregon’s youth and communities of color.

For decades, the tobacco industry has also aggressively targeted Hispanic and Latino communities, using culturally tailored advertising and sponsorships to push harmful products. As a result, half of Hispanic adults who smoke use menthol cigarettes, which make it harder to quit. And for those who do want to quit, access to culturally competent cessation resources is still too limited.

This is a public health crisis, and we have a chance to do something about it. By passing SB 702 and ending the sale of flavored tobacco products in Oregon, we can protect our kids, prevent lifelong addiction, and push back against an industry that has exploited our communities for far too long.

We respectfully urge you to vote YES SB 702 and continue Oregon’s commitment to protecting families and youth.

⁶ VanFrank B, et al., “Adult Smoking Cessation — United States, 2022”.