

Dear House Committee on Revenue,

As a physician, public health advocate and mother of a 19yo son, I am passionate about protecting youth from tobacco and nicotine products to protect their health!

Young people in Oregon will be healthier when we fix tobacco prevention laws that allow nicotine products to be legally sold to children. Loopholes in Oregon Tobacco Laws put youth at risk of addiction and lifelong health problems. Current Oregon laws protect young people by prohibiting the sale of tobacco products and inhalant delivery systems (“e-cigarettes” or “vapes”) to youth under 21 years old. However, the tobacco industry continues to create highly addictive nicotine products that they market to youth. To get around state laws, tobacco companies pivoted to synthetic oral nicotine products, such as nicotine pouches, gums, tablets, and gummies, with flavors such as mint, fruit and cinnamon. Synthetic nicotine is just as addictive and harmful as tobacco-derived nicotine, but evades the legal definition of tobacco products. These predatory practices entice youth to become addicted lifelong customers. **They are very popular with high school and college students-I know because of my college aged son and the young adults I treat in my everyday practice.**

Key tobacco prevention loopholes in Oregon law include:

- Oregon laws are silent on synthetic oral nicotine products. This allows retailers to sell to youth under 21 years old, putting them at risk for addiction and lifelong health problems.
- Synthetic oral nicotine products are not taxed or regulated, making them cheaper and easier to get. Youth are less likely to buy tobacco products when they are more expensive.
- Oregon tobacco law requires all tobacco sales to be face-to-face, but a loophole in this law allows some types of businesses to deliver products to home residences. This makes it much more difficult to check the customer’s age.
- Oregon has two sets of tobacco control laws – one for businesses, one for individuals. OHA is charged with enforcing only the violations for businesses. But having two sets of laws makes it hard for business owners, staff, other enforcement programs, and the general public to understand the consequences of tobacco sales violations. Fair and equitable tobacco enforcement should ensure that businesses and the tobacco industry, not the youth they target, are held accountable for violations.

Removing these loopholes will protect youth.

HB 2528 will protect Oregon youth, and provides clear enforcement pathways for tobacco sales violations, by fixing state tobacco laws to:

- Amend the definition of tobacco products to include synthetic oral nicotine products.

- Close the home delivery loophole to ensure youth are unable to purchase tobacco products online and have them delivered to their homes.
- Give OHA authority to hold retailers responsible for tobacco violations, and remove individual criminal penalties that put the blame on young people when tobacco sellers entice them into addiction.

Thank you for protecting our children and young adults by helping to pass HB 2528.

Sincerely,

Jenny Pompilio MD, MPH

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