



Dear Chair Meek, Vice Chair McLane, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Cynthia Branger Muñoz, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Oregon Education Association (OEA), which represents more than 42,000 educators across the state. We are deeply committed to supporting the health, safety, and academic success of Oregon's students. Today, I write in strong support of Senate Bill 702A, a public health measure that will significantly reduce youth access to flavored tobacco and nicotine products.

Nearly all tobacco use begins during adolescence. As educators, we are seeing the consequences of flavored tobacco products—especially e-cigarettes—playing out in our classrooms every day. Flavored e-cigarettes are by far the most popular tobacco product among Oregon teens, with over 10% of 11th graders reporting use in the past month. Some disposable e-cigarettes now contain more nicotine than 200 cigarettes. These products are not only harmful; they are deliberately marketed to appeal to children. Flavors like cotton candy, watermelon ice, and cool mint are designed to hook young users—and nearly 90% of youth who vape report using flavored products.

This rise in nicotine use among youth is having a real impact in our schools. Educators are contending with an increase in behavioral issues, lost instructional time, and daily disruptions from students vaping in restrooms, classrooms, and even during class. Nicotine addiction impacts students' attention, mood, and impulse control—all of which interfere with their ability to learn and thrive.

Senate Bill 702A makes important progress in protecting kids and supporting safe learning environments by:

- Limiting the sale of flavored tobacco products to OLCC-licensed liquor stores, which reduces the number of retailers from more than 2,800 to around 282—and potentially fewer if court rulings uphold county-level flavored tobacco bans.
- Ensuring these products are only available in establishments that do not allow unaccompanied minors, unlike grocery and convenience stores.
- Establishing regulatory authority over nicotine pouches, including unflavored products like Zyn, to help keep them out of kids' hands.
- Preserving the authority of local governments to prohibit flavored tobacco product sales altogether.

This is a strong and necessary step forward. However, we also encourage future action to address flavored cannabis products. These are also being marketed in kid-friendly forms and flavors and are increasingly accessible to young people. If we are serious about protecting youth from addiction, our policies must eventually reflect the full landscape of flavored substances that pose similar risks.



Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in Oregon. Every year, 5,500 Oregonians die from smoking-related illnesses. Smoking costs Oregon \$1.79 billion annually in healthcare, \$373 million in Medicaid expenses, and \$3.7 billion in lost productivity. And 95% of adult smokers started before the age of 21.

Senate Bill 702A is a common-sense, urgently needed policy that supports public health, protects students, and reflects the values of our communities. On behalf of more than 42,000 educators across the state, I respectfully urge you to pass SB 702A.