

May 19, 2025

The Honorable Sen. Mark Meek
Chair, Senate Finance and Revenue Committee
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR

RE: Providence Supports Senate Bill 702

Chair Meek and members of the Committee,

On behalf of Providence Health & Services, Oregon's largest hospital and health system, I write today to recommit our strong support for Senate Bill 702. Ending the sale of flavored tobacco promotes the opportunity to end future addiction and prevent significant costs in Oregon's health care system.

Tobacco, nicotine and their synthetic counterparts are responsible for over 5,500 preventable deaths every year in Oregon. We see these patients at their most vulnerable – as victims of heart attacks, stroke, and cancer among other conditions. We hear their struggles – many lifelong – with addiction caused by the sale of tobacco and nicotine products. While we offer support and coaching to help our patients quit – we see the challenges associated with these products every day.

On the other end of the spectrum are today's children – one in five of which was born in a Providence hospital. These young Oregonians are being bombarded by \$90 million in marketing campaigns every year aimed at getting them to try tobacco and nicotine products. The newest of these products, Zyn, delivers an exceptionally high dose of nicotine – combined with flavoring – without the social ills of spitting or smoke/vapor. These products are designed to attract today's youth and start a new generation of addiction.

We urge the legislature to end the sale of all flavored nicotine and tobacco products. Zyn in particular needs to be made part of the definition of a tobacco product and subject to Tobacco 21, a policy Providence also supported.

In order to bend the cost curve in health care, we must prevent the next generation of tobacco and nicotine addiction. Senate Bill 702 will achieve this end by eliminating the flavor components that drive youth to tobacco and nicotine use. By ending the cycle of addiction, we will combat nicotine and tobacco related diseases.

Thank you for your partnership in keeping the next generation of Oregonians healthy!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ben LeBlanc".

Ben LeBlanc, M.D.
Chief Executive
Providence Medical Group Oregon
Providence Health & Services