



May 20, 2025

RE: Support SB 702-A

Chair Meek, Vice Chairs, and members of the Committee,

I'm Jane Leo, Oregon Government Relations Director for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). ACS CAN, the nonprofit, non-partisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society advocates for fact-based public policies that reduce death and suffering from cancer for everyone which include policies aimed at reducing tobacco use.

ACS CAN supports ending the sale of menthol cigarettes and all other flavored tobacco products. We urge you to support SB 702-A and make this critical public health issue a priority.

Restricting the sale of menthol cigarettes and all other flavored tobacco products would be a significant step to reduce tobacco use in Oregon. Removing these flavored tobacco products from the market can be a critical component to a comprehensive strategy to reduce initiation and lifelong addiction. Laws aimed at ending the sale of menthol cigarettes and all other flavored tobacco products are most effective when they include all products, all flavors, and all retailers. These laws have the potential to reduce youth initiation of tobacco products and help support those who are trying to quit.

This year alone, it is estimated that more than 26,980 people in Oregon will be diagnosed with cancer.ⁱ An estimated 1,601 deaths are caused by smoking each year in Oregon including 27.9% of cancer deaths. Smoking is estimated to cost Oregon \$1.79 billion annually in health care costs directly caused by smoking, including \$373.6 million in Medicaid costs caused by smoking.ⁱⁱ

Flavors are a marketing weapon used by tobacco manufacturers to target youth and young people to a lifetime of addiction. Altering tobacco products' ingredients and design, like adding flavors, can mask the harsh effects, facilitate nicotine uptake, and increase a product's overall appeal.ⁱⁱⁱ Fruit and candy flavorings, including minty menthol, in tobacco products are a promotional tool to lure new, young users, and are aggressively marketed with creative campaigns by tobacco companies.^{iv} Products with flavors like cherry, grape, cotton candy, and gummy bear are clearly not aimed at established, adult tobacco users and years of tobacco industry documents confirm the intended use of flavors is to target youth.^v Furthermore, youth report flavors as a leading reason they use tobacco products and perceive flavored products as less harmful.^{vi,vii}

According to the Oregon Health Authority, over 10% of 11th graders use e-cigarettes and approximately 6,000 Oregon kids try cigarettes for the first time each year. More than three in four Oregon youth who use tobacco use flavored tobacco. Among adults who smoke, 21.3% use menthol cigarettes, but this increases dramatically when broken down by race with more than 60% of Oregonians who are Black using menthol cigarettes.^{viii}

Long before cigarette companies started adding fruit, candy, and alcohol flavorings to cigarettes, they



were manipulating levels of menthol to addict new, young customers. Many tobacco products come in flavors such as watermelon ice, banana freeze, citrus chill, and grapefruit refresher. Menthol acts to mask the harsh taste of tobacco with a minty flavor and by reducing irritation at the back of the throat with a cooling sensation. Additionally, menthol may enhance the delivery of nicotine. Knowing that youth who experience less negative physiological effects of smoking are more likely to continue smoking regularly, the tobacco industry has spent decades manipulating its menthol brand-specific product line to appeal to youth.

The FDA's preliminary scientific investigation on menthol cigarettes concluded that menthol cigarette smoking increases initiation and progression to smoking, increases dependency, and reduces cessation success, particularly among African Americans who smoke.^{ix} African Americans who smoke are more than 2.5 times more likely to smoke menthol than non-Hispanic White Americans.^x These disparities are no accident. Tobacco companies have aggressively targeted certain communities with their menthol products, leading to an unequal burden of death and disease. Internal tobacco industry documents show that the tobacco companies were intentionally targeting African Americans, other communities of color and the LGBTQ+ community through advertising in magazines with high readership by these populations, including youth, and by targeting specific neighborhoods with higher Hispanic and African American populations with more advertising and promotions.^{xi} Ending the sale of menthol cigarettes will reduce long-entrenched health disparities and lead to greater equity in health outcomes.

As of May 14, 2025, two states and more than 200 localities have ended the sale of menthol cigarettes and all other flavored tobacco products. It's time for the state of Oregon to join them.

Restricting the sale of menthol cigarettes and all other flavored tobacco products will make it harder for the tobacco industry to target youth and young adults with their addictive and deadly products and help support adults who are trying to quit.

We urge you to vote yes on SB 702-A.

ⁱ [Oregon | American Cancer Society](#)

ⁱⁱ [The Toll of Tobacco in Oregon - Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ FDA Guidance for Industry and FDA Staff, "General Questions and Answers on the Ban of Cigarettes that Contain Certain Characterizing Flavors (Edition 2) ("FDA Guidance on Characterizing Flavors").

^{iv} Delnevo, C, et al., "Preference for flavoured cigar brands among youth, young adults and adults in the USA," Tobacco Control, epub ahead of print, April 10, 2014. King, BA, et al., "Flavored-Little-Cigar and Flavored-Cigarette Use Among U.S. Middle and High School Students," Journal of Adolescent Health 54(1):40-6, January 2014.

^v Carpenter CM, Wayne GF, Pauly JL, Koh HK, Connolly GN. New cigarette brands with flavors that appeal to youth: tobacco marketing strategies. Health Affairs. 2005; 24(6): 1601-1610.

^{vi} Ambrose et al. Flavored tobacco product use among U.S. youth aged 12-17 years, 2013-2014. JAMA, 2015; 314(17): 1871-3.

^{vii} Huang L-L, Baker HM, Meernik C, Ranney LM, Richardson A, Goldstein AO. Impact of non-menthol flavours in tobacco products on perceptions and use among youth, young adults and adults: a systematic review. Tobacco Control 2016.

^{viii} [Oregon Health Authority : Oregon Tobacco Facts : Tobacco Prevention : State of Oregon](#)

^{ix} FDA. Preliminary Scientific Evaluation of the Possible Public Health Effects of Menthol versus Nonmenthol Cigarettes. <https://www.fda.gov/media/86497/download>

^x National Survey on Drug Use and Health 2020, 2019-2020, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Data Archive; <https://pdas.samhsa.gov/#/>

^{xi} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Tobacco Use Among U.S. Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups—African Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 1998