

Submitter:

Nirdosh Dhakal

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

SB702

Good morning, Chair and Committee,

My name is Nirdosh Dhakal, and I am the owner of four convenience stores in Portland. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am here to urge you to oppose Senate Bill 702 A.

As a parent of two young children, I strongly believe that tobacco, nicotine, and vape products must be sold exclusively to adults 21 and older. Convenience stores like mine serve as gatekeepers, ensuring that these products do not end up in the hands of minors. We take this responsibility seriously.

I'd like to clarify a common misconception about liquor stores. While it is often stated, that liquor stores are operated by the OLCC, the reality is slightly different. The OLCC hires agents to manage store operations, but key responsibilities—such as transactions, training, hiring, and payroll—are handled by individuals hired by the OLCC. Liquor store employees are not OLCC employees, and there is no difference in training or operational regulations between liquor stores and convenience stores. In fact, the data suggest that compliance rate in Convenience stores are much better than that of liquor stores.

Instead of implementing sweeping flavor bans that apply to all stores except liquor stores, the most effective strategies for reducing youth nicotine use are enforcement and education. This bill does nothing to prevent minors from purchasing tobacco products—it simply shifts a significant portion of my business to liquor store locations based on store classification and special state-issued licenses, rather than successful ID compliance rates.

Furthermore, the majority of liquor stores lack the capacity and logistics to handle tobacco product sales. Many liquor stores do not even carry tobacco, as their primary focus is alcohol sales. These stores also operate without competition due to the nature of their business, meaning this bill would unfairly divert a substantial portion of revenue from convenience stores like mine to a select few businesses. For many small operators, this shift would be financially devastating.

Oregon is already facing economic challenges, and this bill would only add to the financial uncertainty of small business owners like myself. We must be extremely cautious when implementing policies that restrict certain locations from selling 21+ flavored products. Liquor stores account for less than 8% of businesses selling tobacco and nicotine products, and this bill would result in significant revenue losses and job insecurity for businesses that are not liquor stores.

Additionally, research shows that some of these products are less harmful than traditional tobacco and are commonly used by adults to transition away from more dangerous tobacco consumption. Restricting access would diminish incentives for many individuals to choose safer alternatives.

As a student of political science and a citizen of this great country, I believe in representative democracy—where elected officials listen to the concerns of their constituents and make informed decisions. Frankly, I struggle to understand the intent behind this bill. If its goal is to prevent minors from accessing tobacco and nicotine products, it fails to accomplish that and instead redistributes business based solely on store classification rather than compliance rates.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to oppose Senate Bill 702 A.

Thank you.