

May 22, 2025

Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue
Oregon State Senate
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for Senate Bill 702A

Dear Chair Meek, Vice Chair McLane, and members of the Committee:

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Oregon, and nearly all tobacco use begins during youth and young adulthood. According to pediatricians, cigarette smoking can set kids up for a lifetime of nicotine addiction and serious health conditions like heart disease and lung disease.

E-cigarettes are the most popular tobacco product among Oregon teens, with over 10% of 11th graders using them in the past month.ⁱ Today, some disposable e-cigarettes can contain more nicotine than 200 cigarettes, which puts youth users at greater risk for addiction. Tobacco companies knowingly market harmful products to young users. Flavored products like cool mint, watermelon ice, and cotton candy attract and hook new young users. These tactics are working: nearly 90% of youth e-cigarette users use flavored products.ⁱⁱ

In dentistry, we use flavored products – in toothpaste and fluoride – to convince kids to put stuff in their mouth they wouldn't otherwise. That's the same approach the tobacco industry is using with flavored products now – except with lifelong negative impacts.

SB 702A Makes Important Progress in Stopping the Use of Flavored Tobacco by Young People

Tobacco use is directly linked to gum disease making them more susceptible to infection. The bacteria in the mouth thrive in an environment created by tobacco products, resulting in gum inflammation, bleeding, and, if untreated, tooth loss.

It also causes the discoloration of teeth. The nicotine and tar in tobacco products stain teeth, leading to yellowing or even brown discoloration. This not only affects appearance but also weakens the tooth enamel over time. The longer tobacco use continues, the harder it becomes to restore the natural whiteness of teeth, often requiring costly and painful dental procedures. SB 702A takes important steps to significantly reduce access to flavored tobacco products and ensure that they are not being sold to kids. By requiring these products to only be sold in licensed OLCC liquor stores, we will be taking important, meaningful steps to address this public health crisis.

- There are currently 2,800+ tobacco retail license holders in Oregon and this legislation will reduce that number to 282 possible retailers - and likely less if the Oregon Supreme Court affirms the Appeals Court ruling upholding county ordinances prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products in Oregon's two-most populated counties.

- OLCC licensed liquor establishments prohibit entry to individual under 21 unless accompanied by a parent, unlike grocery and convenience stores that regularly sell a variety of other products to minors. This, along with the mandatory nature of age verification, will create stronger safeguards against underage purchases.
- It will establish regulatory authority over nicotine pouches. That will bring Zyn and like products under Oregon regulatory authority to ensure that inspectors can prevent these products from getting to kids – including the unflavored version.
- It will clarify and preserve the ability of local jurisdictions to end the sale of flavored tobacco products altogether.

The Legislature Should Act This Session on This Public Health Crisis

With the declining sales of cigarettes, the tobacco industry is desperate to find ways to hook a new generation of users. We have seen this in recent years with the explosion of vaping and the more recent surge in sales of nicotine pouches. Nicotine is an extremely addictive drug and once someone is hooked it can be very difficult to stop. That path to addiction can set up young people for a lifetime of health complications. Each time this legislature fails to act, we condemn more young Oregonians to this fate - and ourselves to the dramatic economic costs tobacco use imposes on our health care system and society. We urge you to act now.

The toll on one's overall health cannot be overstated. Oral health is interconnected with overall health, and the problems caused by tobacco use often extend beyond the mouth. The oral health of our kids matters—don't let tobacco take it away. I urge your support for Senate Bill 702A to end the sale of flavored tobacco products.

Sincerely,



Caroline Zeller, DDS, MPH
President, Oregon Dental Association

ⁱ Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Student Health Survey.

ⁱⁱ Results from the FDA 2024 Annual National Youth Tobacco Survey.