

June 18, 2025

Re: HB 3940



Dear Members of the House Committee on Revenue:

As the Director of Klamath County Public Health, I'd like to submit comment regarding the -A20 amendment to HB 3940 regarding the proposed tax on synthetic nicotine products. Historically, a portion of tax revenue on tobacco or tobacco-related products have been dedicated to alleviating and preventing public health impacts they inevitably cause. I see this amendment proposes using this tax revenue to cover the cost that wildfires put on our communities.

Living in a community significantly impacted by wildfires, I recognize and support the need for a dedicated wildfire funding stream. However, diverting dollars from one of the most highly addictive substances on the planet from addiction prevention programs is not the solution, especially if it means public health is cut out entirely. As we've seen already, neglecting addiction prevention only creates problems in the future that are costly and difficult to treat.

Because wildfire intervention is important and has direct public health impacts, I strongly urge you to raise the synthetic nicotine tax proposed in the amendment from 65 cents to 90 cents and provide that additional 25 cents to local public health to do either wildfire-related work or addiction prevention work. This way, the wildfire work is fully funded and local public health is able to utilize the additional revenue on prevention and cessation programming.

You may wonder what public health's wildfire-related work might entail, so I'll quickly give you a few examples. Public health is required to address a variety of accountability metrics, one of which is non-infectious respiratory illness. This includes respiratory issues that send individuals to the emergency department due to wildfire smoke exposure. Public health helps to identify and support cleaner air spaces so households that don't have air purification can seek refuge in community spaces with clean air. We are also a trusted source of information for air quality information and actions to take to protect vulnerable community members.

Data shows that adults living in rural Oregon is overburdened by tobacco use, and youth are experimenting with nicotine products at an alarming rate. The respiratory disease burden caused by tobacco use makes our community members even more vulnerable to the effects of wildfire smoke exposure. Additionally, revenue from nicotine products should be used to prevent youth from experimenting with them, which is a core function of public health.

Public health is a critical partner that is currently being left out of this bill. Please add 25 cents to the tax for local public health so we can fund wildfire response as well as maintain focus on addiction prevention.

Signed,

Jennifer Little

Jennifer Little, MPH
Director