



## Public Health

**Tanya Phillips, MPH**  
Health Promotion & Preparedness  
Manager

140 S. Holly St.  
Medford, OR 97501  
Phone: 770-7708  
phillit@jacksoncountyor.gov

### Chair Marsh and members of the Committee:

My name is Tanya Phillips; I am the Health Promotion and Preparedness Manager for Jackson County Public Health.

As a public health professional and representative of a government health agency, it is my role and responsibility to protect and improve the health of entire populations, communities, and environments through education, policy development, research, and disease prevention.

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable disease, disability, and death in the United States. In Jackson County, based on 2021 data, it is estimated that there were around 29,900 adults who regularly use cigarettes. That same year, 3,170 individuals suffered from serious tobacco-related illness, \$12.8 million was spent on tobacco-related medical care, and 520 lives were lost due to tobacco-related causes.

In recent decades, growing evidence on the health risks associated with smoking and secondhand smoke exposure has led to the adoption of smoke-free policies in indoor public places and workplaces. In addition, they have been shown to positively affect smoking consumption and cessation rates.

However, home environments remain a major source of secondhand smoke, especially for babies, children, and teens living in multi-unit housing, such as apartment complexes.

Secondhand smoke contains more than 7,000 chemical compounds, including 100 known to be harmful or potentially harmful, and 90 known to cause cancer. Secondhand smoke causes or worsens diseases in kids and adults and can result in death.

According to the CDC, some populations are more likely to be exposed to secondhand smoke. From that list, two groups I want to highlight:

- **People who live in rental and multi-unit housing:** 25% of the US population live in multi-unit housing, and people living in rental housing have a higher prevalence (36.6%) of secondhand smoke exposure compared to those who own their own homes. Even when no one smokes in the home, a neighbor's smoke can drift into other units and

shared spaces through doors, windows, and vents, exposing others to secondhand smoke.

- **People who live with someone who smokes inside the home:** people who live with someone who smokes inside the home have a higher prevalence (87.8%) of secondhand smoke exposure compared to people who do not live with someone who smokes in the home at 21.4%.

Demand for smoke-free housing is high. Data from Washington State shows that 92% of renters prefer smoke-free housing, and 75% of smokers would rather live in smoke-free housing.

Jackson County Public Health receives multiple complaints each year from renters seeking help enforcing smoke-free housing laws that do not exist. These are renters with chronic health conditions, allergies to cigarette smoke, have limited income, and have exhausted options with property management. By the time these renters are contacting Jackson County Public Health, they are desperate, and their physical and mental health are suffering.

A systematic review of studies demonstrates there is strong scientific evidence that smoke-free policies in multi-unit housing are associated with reduced smoking behavior (reduced smoking quantity, reduced smoking frequency, and/or increased smoking cessation). It also concludes that there is strong scientific evidence that these policies reduce secondhand smoke exposure. These policies are more successful with accessible cessation and enforcement.

**In conclusion**, HB 4120 aligns with scientific evidence to reduce secondhand smoke exposure and promote positive behavior change among smokers. It also reflects the preferences of the vast majority of renters who prefer smoke-free living environments.

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