

Good afternoon Chair Greenlick and members of the committee,

My name is Kylie Menagh-Johnson, and I live in Portland. Thank you for holding this hearing today on protecting children from secondhand smoke in cars.

My father smoked a pipe and chewed tobacco. He was always trying to quit. He hated his addiction, and he put up a sign at our house asking guests not to smoke. Like a lot of kids, I did not want the adults I knew and loved to smoke. Once, I even threw away the cigarette pack of a friend of my parents.

When I was ten, my father, who was in the National Guard, was shot and killed. My brother and I went to live with our grandmother for a month. We flew across the country with her from Virginia to Oregon, and sat with her in the smoking section. She was a chain smoker. I sat there next to her for hours, with my sleeve across my nose and mouth, trying not to breathe the smoke. It made me feel so sick. It was awful. At her house, she always went outside to smoke, but she smoked in her car. Again, I would desperately try not to breathe the smoke. Even though she cracked the window open, there was no way to avoid it. We were trapped.

There are many babies and children in our state who have to suffer like this every day. Every day, their parents or other trusted adults smoke around them, in homes, outside, and in the car. Most of those adults want to quit. We know that smoke-free rules help people quit and stay quit. This law could make a huge difference in our communities--protecting children from secondhand smoke, helping parents quit and stay quit, and helping break the cycle of smoking addiction that gets passed down from generation to generation.

As a mother and step-mother of four children, I do everything I can to keep my kids healthy and safe, but I know that they learn a lot by watching and copying the people around them. Children look to us--their parents and teachers--to understand how to act and what to do. By making cars a safe haven from smoke, children will no longer see their parents smoking in cars, and that will help prevent those children from becoming smokers themselves. It will also protect them from asthma, ear infections, respiratory infections, cancer, heart disease... the list goes on.

This is so important. Our children--our babies--do not have the ability to stick up for themselves and keep themselves safe from secondhand smoke. As a community, it is so important that we take action and protect these kids. Thank you so much for your leadership in taking this matter forward, and I encourage all of you to vote yes on SB 444 A.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Kylie Menagh-Johnson