



April 29th, 2013
Letter of Support
HB 2870A

Chair Burdick and Members of the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee:

The Coalition of Local Health Officials, representing all 34 local health departments in Oregon, strongly urges you to support HB 2870A, removing the preemption on counties to raise local tobacco taxes.

Oregon's Local Health Departments are charged with protecting the public's health and preventing the spread of disease in local communities throughout Oregon. County Boards of Commissioners serve as the Local Public Health Authorities responsible for the health of their communities. Tobacco prevention is an essential component of protecting the health of the community, as it is still the leading cause of preventable death in Oregon, accounts for over 6,900 Oregonian lives each year and costs the state more than \$2 billion a year.

Local public health departments work with local communities to prevent youth from smoking and support adults who want to quit. However, Counties and Local Health Departments currently lack ability to implement one of the best evidence-based tools for preventing youth from smoking in the first place, which is raising the price. Over 16 percent of Oregon high school youth smoke and studies show that a ten percent increase in price will lead to a seven percent reduction in consumption among price sensitive children

HB 2870A would:

- Allow counties to raise the price on tobacco products at a rate not to exceed the state tax on the same product.
- Require an investment of at least 40% of the revenue raised to go to public health services, and mental health and addiction.

The Coalition of Local Health Officials urges you to support this important bill.

Thank you,

Morgan D. Cowling, MPA
Executive Director
Coalition of Local Health Officials