



Testimony in Support of HB 2870

March 15th, 2013

House Revenue Committee

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Director of Health Policy and Government Relations

Chair Barnhart and members of the committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association in support of HB 2870, legislation to remove the prohibition against imposition of taxes by counties on cigarettes and tobacco products, and requiring at least 20 percent of any revenue raised to be allocated to public health.

The Oregon Nurses Association is Oregon's oldest and largest nursing union and professional association, and is proud to represent over 13,000 registered nurses, advanced practice nurses, and nursing students in Oregon.

ONA supports policies that focus on prevention of chronic disease and promote wellness.

From emergency rooms, to schools, to clinics, to public health departments, nurses work with patients to prevent them from smoking, and to help those who already use tobacco access the resources they need to quit. Tobacco use is widely known to cause heart disease, diabetes, asthma, and cancer, and those who use tobacco often face a lifetime of health consequences.

The most effective way to ensure someone does not smoke or use tobacco is to prevent them from starting. Nine out of ten smokers begin smoking before the age of 18, and the younger a person is when they begin smoking, the greater his or her chances are of ultimately becoming a lifelong tobacco user. This makes prevention especially important for Oregon's youth. Research shows that smoking at an early age increases the risk of developing lung cancer or experiencing other chronic health problems in adulthood due to nicotine addiction.ⁱ

Increasing the price of cigarettes and tobacco products can be a significant deterrent for youth—who are often most sensitive to price—to start smoking, increasing the odds that they will stay smoke-free. The revenue raised by a county tobacco tax can help fund vital public health services such as tobacco prevention and cessation programs.

Counties around the state struggle to fund public health and other services, and allowing them to raise revenue, while simultaneously limiting youth access to a harmful product is a win-win.

Please support passage of House Bill 2870.

Thank you.

ⁱ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids Factsheet, *The Path to Smoking Addiction Starts at Very Young Ages*, <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0127.pdf>.