



Testimony before the House Committee on Revenue
HB 4129 Tobacco Tax Increase
February 11, 2014

Chair Barnhart, Vice Chairs Bailey and Berger and members of the committee,

My name is Katy King and I'm here representing the Coalition of Local Health Officials.

HB 4129 increases the rate of taxation on cigarettes and tobacco products. The Coalition of Local Health Officials, representing all 34 local health departments in Oregon, supports HB 4129 with amendments that would dedicate a percentage of the tax increase revenues to local public health tobacco prevention programs. This will help to promote broader collaboration between Local Public Health Departments and Coordinated Care Organizations (CCO).

Oregon's Local Public Health Departments are charged with protecting the public's health and preventing the spread of disease in local communities throughout Oregon. Tobacco is still the leading cause of preventable death in Oregon, accounts for over 7,000¹ Oregonian lives each year and costs the state more than \$2.4 billion a year.²

Local Public Health Departments work with local communities to prevent youth from smoking and support adults who want to quit. Raising the price of tobacco is one of the best evidence-based tools to prevent youth from smoking. Nine percent³ 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. It is estimated that 90 percent of all smokers began their nicotine addiction as teenagers. Among youth who persist in smoking, a third will die prematurely because of it.

This bill will help continue efforts to prevent young people from smoking and to reduce the number of smokers in Oregon. Allocating a percentage to local public health will help to align tobacco and chronic disease prevention work with CCOs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

¹ Oregon Tobacco Facts 2011;

<https://public.health.oregon.gov/PreventionWellness/TobaccoPrevention/Pages/pubs.aspx>

² Ibid.

³ Oregon Healthy Teens 2013;9.4% of 11th graders smoke; confirmed 2/6/14 with Steve Fiala.