

Health Department

Community Wellness & Prevention Program

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SUBMITTED BY: A. Adams

Chair Barnhart, Vice Chairs Bailey and Berger and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 4129. My name is Adelle Adams and I am representing Multnomah County. I work in the Tobacco Prevention and Education Section of the County Health Department.

HB 4129 increases the rate of taxation on cigarettes and tobacco products. The tobacco tax increase of \$1.50 is win for public health, as making tobacco more expensive is a public health best practice to reduce youth initiation and use and to help people quit. The recent Surgeon General's Report, *The Health Consequences of Smoking - 50 Years of Progress*, clearly states that, "the evidence is sufficient to conclude that increasing the prices of tobacco products, including those resulting from excise tax increases, prevent initiation of tobacco use, promote cessation, and reduce the prevalence and intensity of tobacco use among youth and young adults".

The report's key conclusions provide evidence that calls for dramatic action. It states that as end game strategies are being developed, the following actions should be implemented:

- Raising the average excise cigarette taxes to prevent youth from starting smoking and encouraging smokers to quit.
- Fully funding comprehensive statewide tobacco control programs at CDC recommended levels.
- Counteracting industry marketing by sustaining high impact national media campaigns like the Tips from Former Smokers campaign and FDA's youth prevention campaigns at high frequency level and exposure for 12 months a year for a decade or more.
- Fulfilling the opportunity of the Affordable Care Act to provide access to barrier-free proven tobacco use cessation treatment including counseling and medication to all smokers, especially those with significant mental and physical comorbidities.
- Effective implementation of FDA's authority for tobacco product regulation in order to reduce tobacco product addictiveness and harmfulness.
- Expanding tobacco control and prevention research efforts to increase understanding of the ever changing tobacco control landscape.
- Extending comprehensive smokefree indoor protections to 100% of the U.S. population.

The report also explains that, "evidence-based tobacco control interventions that are effective continue to be underutilized and implemented at far below funding levels recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention".

Implementing tobacco control policies and programs as recommended by *Ending the Tobacco Epidemic: A Tobacco Control Strategic Plan* by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the *Ending the Tobacco Problem: A Blueprint for the Nation* by the Institute of Medicine on a sustained basis at high intensity would accelerate the decline of tobacco use in youth and adults, and also accelerate progress toward the goal of ending the tobacco epidemic.

Multnomah County is one of the 34 local health departments charged with protecting the public's health and preventing the spread of disease in local communities throughout Oregon. Sadly, tobacco still remains the leading cause of preventable death in Oregon. In Multnomah County alone, over \$223 million is spent each year on medical care for tobacco-related illness. Another \$195 million in productivity is lost due to tobacco-related illness and early death.

Please remember, that nearly 90% of smokers begin smoking *before* the age of 18. Almost no one starts smoking at age 25. It is imperative that we implement strategies that prevent youth from smoking and support adults who want to quit. Dedicating a portion of HB 4129's \$1.50 tax to tobacco prevention and education programs will help to fund interventions that will do just that.

Thank you for your time today and the opportunity to provide testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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