

February 9, 2015

My name is Alexa Shook and I am the Director of Health Promotion and Wellness for PacificSource Health Plans. On behalf of PacificSource, I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide comment in support of House Bill 2546 to amend laws concerning sale of tobacco products to, and use of tobacco products by, minors so those laws equally apply to inhalant delivery systems.

As an independent, not-for-profit community health plan that serves the commercial, Medicare and Medicaid needs of Oregon residents, PacificSource supports healthy initiatives and policies that are aimed at improving the health of Oregon's children and their families.

Public Health experts have long educated people on the importance of quitting tobacco to decrease a person's risk of early death, cancer, and other diseases. We also know from public health records that most lifelong smokers (and smokeless tobacco users) begin these habits in their teens or early 20s. For this reason, PacificSource pursues opportunities and partnerships that advance community and worksite wellness and prevention policies and research, including but not limited to tobacco prevention.

For example, PacificSource has made substantial investments in our local Universities – Oregon State University and University of Oregon - to support their Healthy Campus Initiatives using the lens of physical activity, nutrition, stress management and tobacco free living. In 2012, the University of Oregon was the first University in the Pac-12 Conference to go smoke and tobacco free, leveraging PacificSource's support to promote their smoke and tobacco free policy on campus. Likewise, Oregon State University also went smoke free in the fall of 2012, with help from its partnership with PacificSource.

Because of the known health risks associated with the use of tobacco products and PacificSource's mission as a community health plan, smoking and tobacco products use, *including smokeless e-cigarettes* is prohibited on all PacificSource owned properties.

Existing studies on inhalant delivery systems' vapor emissions and cartridge contents have found a number of dangerous substances and can create the potential for exposure to dangerous concentrations of nicotine. Research demonstrates that local tobacco retail licensing policies can dramatically reduce youth access to cigarettes. It is for these reasons and others that PacificSource Health Plans is strongly supportive of extending the same protections around the distribution and sale of inhalant delivery systems to minors, as those that are in force around sale and distribution of tobacco products. Likewise, we support the additional regulatory and oversight functions contemplated in this bill, to successfully implement these important safeguards.

PacificSource shares in the desire to promote a wholesome environment where children are encouraged to make healthful choices that allow them to grow up to lead healthy, productive and prosperous lives. And as public health advocates, we know that in addition to the other many adverse health consequences, nicotine use increases susceptibility of addiction to other drugs of abuse. We must take steps now, at both the local and the state level, to address issues related to the sale of tobacco products, access by minors, sales relative to locations serving children and compliance monitoring.

On behalf of PacificSource Health Plans, thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 2546 this afternoon.

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