

Oregon House of Representatives  
House Committee on Health Care  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Room 453  
Salem, Oregon 97301  
Feb. 20, 2015

Subject: HB 2546

Dear Committee Members,

The Committee materials on HB 2546 document that some Committee members and public health officials have strongly held opinions about policy positions on the increased regulation of “inhalant delivery systems” that the Oregon Legislature should enact into law. Not the least of these is Section 8(b) which would create a new sanction against public possession of devices rather than active substances:

*A person under 18 years of age may not possess tobacco products or an inhalant delivery system unless the person is in a private residence accompanied by the parent or guardian of the person and the parent or guardian has consented to the person possessing tobacco products or the inhalant delivery system.*

As is often the case, the holders of these positions defend their goals based on their views of science and evidence.

In a bit of serendipity, a review article appeared in the 23 January 2015 (Vol 347, Issue 6220) of *Science* magazine that is quite timely. *Science* is the flagship science and policy publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). I’ve attached a copy of the article headlined “**Smoke and fire over e-cigarettes**”, to be included with this letter in the record. The sub-headline summarizes:

*As nations adopt regulatory measures for e-cigarettes, it is imperative to understand how approaches to risk, cost-benefit, and trade-offs have shaped interpretations of evidence.*

While legislators and public health officials who support HB 2546 may feel their beliefs are bolstered by the actions of various governmental entities including the WHO, those who don’t and the general public may find this succinct analysis of the real nature of the issue as policy debate, rather than a discussion of the medical science, to be useful and informative. The concluding paragraph sums up the real issues for the nation and the Committee quite well:

*Ultimately, decisions about how to proceed will be made in the face of evolving evidence and the undeniable burden imposed by tobacco cigarettes. Decision-making may draw on elements of both precautionary thinking and harm reduction, but weighing the risks and benefits is unavoidable. It is imperative to recognize that deep precaution precludes that possibility. It has served as a kind of trump argument, hostile to the notion of trade-offs, seeing in them perilous compromise. Such a posture does not serve either science or policy well.*

Thank You,

Best Regards,  
Rick Hangartner, PhD  
(Oregon)