



March 23, 2015

TO: The Honorable Laurie Monnes Anderson, Chair
The Honorable Jeff Kruse, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health Care

FROM: Karen Girard, Manager
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Subject: SB 415, Flavored Tobacco

Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the committee, I am Karen Girard, the Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Manager for the Oregon Health Authority.

I am here today to present information related to SB 415, concerning flavored tobacco.

Addiction to tobacco starts in adolescence; in fact, nine of ten adults who smoke report that they started smoking before turning 18.

Kids in Oregon are under constant pressure to start using tobacco. Tobacco products are enticing our kids, even at the earliest ages. Tobacco products are sweet, cheap and easy to get – often placed next to the candy and at a child’s eye level in stores. And like candy, tobacco products come in bright packaging and a variety of flavors.

In 2009, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration banned the use of flavor additives in cigarettes as an important step in preventing children and adolescents from starting to smoke. Although cigarettes can no longer contain flavors other than menthol or tobacco, the FDA regulation does not apply to other tobacco products, like little cigars, chewing tobacco, hookah tobacco, and electronic cigarettes. These non-cigarette tobacco products still come in a variety of flavors including peach, strawberry, and grape.

The appeal of these flavored products is represented in the data we collect on tobacco use behaviors among Oregon youth. While approximately 9 percent of all 11th graders in Oregon smoke cigarettes, about 18 percent of 11th graders use other tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, cigars, hookah, and chew. While the shapes, sizes, packaging, and modes of ingestion vary for these tobacco products, what they all have in common is their availability in a variety of flavors.

Flavors mask the natural harshness and taste of tobacco, making flavored tobacco products easier to use and increasing their appeal among youth. According to Portland State University researchers, flavor additives that are being used to sweeten tobacco products are the same as those used in LifeSavers™ and Kool-Aid™.¹ These types of fruit, candy, and dessert flavors appeal to kids and young people,² who report they choose tobacco products with flavors over unflavored tobacco because they ‘taste better’.³

Flavored tobacco use is also an issue of equity. The use of flavored tobacco products among tobacco users enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan is 20 percent higher than tobacco users who are privately insured. Flavored tobacco use is 52 percent higher among tobacco users who live in lower-income households compared to tobacco users in higher-income households (25 percent vs. 16 percent).

The Public Health Division appreciates this committee addressing flavored tobacco products. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

¹ Brown JE, Luo W, Isabelle LM, Pankow JF. Candy flavorings in tobacco. *N Engl J Med.* 2014;370(23):2250-2.

² FDA Fact Sheet: Flavored tobacco products. See: <http://www.fda.gov/downloads/TobaccoProducts/ProtectingKidsfromTobacco/FlavoredTobacco/UCM183214.pdf>. Accessed 13 Feb 2015.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Bidi use among urban youth—Massachusetts, March–April. *MMWR* 1999;48:796–9.