

**March 23rd, 2015**  
**Testimony to the Senate Committee On Health Care**  
**Support of SB 415**

Chair Monnes Anderson, Vice-Chair Kruse, and Members of the Senate Health Care Committee:

My name is Sara Hartstein and I am the Benton County Health Policy Specialist. I am testifying today on behalf of the Coalition of Local Health Officials, representing the 34 Local Health Departments who work diligently to protect the public and prevent death and disease. The Coalition of Local Health Officials supports SB 415, prohibiting the sale and distribution of flavored tobacco products and inhalant delivery systems.

Tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable death in Oregon. In Benton County, 1,750 people suffer from a serious illness caused by tobacco use, and \$16.9 million dollars are spent on treating tobacco related illness.<sup>1</sup>

Flavored cigarettes, other than menthol, are banned by federal legislation, but other flavored tobacco products (e.g., cigarillos, little cigars and smokeless tobacco) are still allowed to be sold. The tobacco industry has long recognized the benefits of sweet flavors in attracting new tobacco users, especially kids. In 2013, 17.8 percent of Oregon 11<sup>th</sup> grade students reported using smokeless tobacco, cigars, hookah tobacco, dissolvable tobacco, or e-cigarettes.<sup>2</sup>

These tobacco products are offered in many different flavors and come in bright packaging. Research conducted at Portland State University found the flavor chemicals used in popular candy and drink products, such as LifeSavers, Jolly Ranchers and Kool-Aid, are the same chemicals used in sweet-flavored tobacco products.<sup>3</sup> According to a CDC study (2013), "flavors can mask the natural harshness and taste of tobacco, making flavored tobacco products easier to use, and may influence the establishment of lifelong tobacco-use patterns among younger individuals". SB 415 would prohibit the sale of flavored tobacco products and help to prevent tobacco use initiation among Oregon youth.

Comprehensive tobacco prevention in conjunction with cessation programs plays a crucial role in the prevention of many chronic conditions. There is more evidence than ever before that tobacco prevention and cessation programs work to reduce smoking, save lives and save money.

The Coalition of Local Health Officials urges you to support this important bill.

Thank you,  
Sara Hartstein  
Health Policy Specialist  
Benton County Health Department

<sup>1</sup> Benton County Tobacco Fact Sheet. 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Oregon Healthy Teen Survey (2013)

<sup>3</sup> Jessica E. Brown, B.S. Wentai Luo, Ph.D. Lorne M. Isabelle, M.S. James F. Pankow, Ph.D. (2014). Candy Flavorings in Tobacco. New England Journal of Medicine.