

Senate Business and Transportation
April 8th, 2015
Support of SB 417

The Coalition of Local Health Officials represents the 34 local public health departments in Oregon who work tirelessly to protect the public's health and prevent the spread of disease. The Coalition of Local Health Officials supports SB 417, which would create a tobacco and inhalant delivery system retail licensure system in Oregon.

One of the top goals of the Tobacco Prevention and Education Program (TPEP), operating in our local public health departments, is to stop youth from getting hooked on tobacco. Local health departments are charged with protecting the health of Oregonians and work tirelessly to create local policies to restrict access to e-cigarettes and tobacco. Retail licensure is an important tool for these prevention efforts.

Unfortunately, in Oregon it is often easy for kids to buy cigarettes. In the most recent assessment, more than 1 in 5 stores in the state were observed selling cigarettes to minors. This dismal compliance rate actually puts Oregon at risk of losing federal funding for substance abuse prevention and treatment, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funding. These assessments are required under a 1992 Federal Act with a "Synar" amendment. The Synar program is now aimed at decreasing youth access to tobacco and requires states to enact and enforce laws prohibiting the sale or distribution of tobacco products to kids under 18.

To get sales to minors rate in compliance, SAMHSA recommends several regulatory approaches, based on other state's low rates of youth access. The first and foremost recommendation is to enact and enforce tobacco license laws.

Retailer licensure would give Oregon a powerful tool to ensure compliance with tobacco laws and pending inhalant delivery system laws. Most states have some system for licensing tobacco retailers, and can withhold those licenses if retailers are selling to kids.

Retail licensure also lets people know what kinds of businesses are in their community. Bars have to have a license to sell alcohol—tobacco and inhalant delivery system retailers should be licensed too.

We urge your support of this important tobacco control bill. Please support SB 417.

Thank you,

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