

May 27, 2015

Chair Hass, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 415A to prohibit distributing, selling or allowing the sale of flavored 'non-combustible' tobacco products. While we support the amendment, we would like to see the bill go further and address cigars, hookah, and other combustible products.

I am Paul Lewis and I serve as the Health Officer in Multnomah County. As a pediatrician, I have spent 19 years working in pediatrics, hospital medicine, and public health in the Portland metro area.

In Multnomah County, we continue to be focused on reducing youth access to not only tobacco and but all nicotine containing products. – We know:

- one third of people who try tobacco become smokers,
- of all attempts to quit less than 5% are successful, and
- more people are addicted to nicotine than any other substance.

As you know, our Board recently passed a local ordinance banning the sale of electronic cigarettes to minors and including them in our local Smokefree Workplace law. We are committed to any and all strategies to prevent access to tobacco and nicotine products by youth and reduce use of these products.

The vast majority of regular smokers begin before age 18.¹ The tobacco epidemic continues because youth and young adults begin to use – and become addicted to – cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products, particularly flavored products.

At the federal level, the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009, banned sale of all cigarettes that have a characterizing flavor, including all fruit and candy flavors. However, the Food and Drug Administration did not assert regulation of flavored non-cigarette tobacco products such as flavored cigars, little cigars and cigarillos, smokeless and snus tobacco, shisha or hookah tobacco and dissolvable tobacco products.

Since that time, the number of flavored tobacco and nicotine products has exploded. On the market today, you can buy – or youth may illegally buy – Tropical Blast cigars at 3 for 99 cents. Or Pineapple flavored cigars at 3 for 99 cents. Or Classic Mint smokeless tobacco – better known as flavored chewing tobacco. Or Mellow Snus – described as tasting like burnt sugar.

States and local jurisdictions have the legal authority to regulate these products as one strategy to prevent our youth from using these appealing tobacco and nicotine products.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012.

We stand in support of the state taking action to prohibit candy and fruit flavored non-cigarette tobacco products such as cigars, little cigars and cigarillos, smokeless and snus tobacco, shisha or hookah tobacco and dissolvable tobacco products.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this vital public health legislation.

Sincerely,

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Tri-County Health Officer, Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington Counties