



Testimony in Support of Increasing the Tobacco and E-cigarette Tax

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Chair Barnhart and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of increasing Oregon's tobacco tax and establishing a tax on e-cigarettes. The Oregon Nurses Association is proud to represent nearly 15,000 Oregon Nurses, working in settings from large hospitals to small local clinics, and corrections, school based health centers and community-based public health.

ONA members recognize the significant health and economic costs of tobacco and nicotine use. Tobacco use is widely known to cause heart disease, diabetes, asthma, and cancer, ultimately leading to \$1.1 billion in lost productivity due to premature tobacco-related deaths in Oregon.¹ The most important work we can do around tobacco and nicotine prevention is preventing non-smokers from taking up tobacco and nicotine, especially our children. Raising the price of tobacco and nicotine has been found to be one of the most effective tobacco and nicotine interventions, especially among youths.²

Currently, Oregon ranks 31st among states in our cigarette tax which is currently at \$1.32 per pack. This leads to \$1.54 billion in annual state health care expenditures from tobacco use.³ An increase in the cigarette tax will help reduce smoking and saves lives, while also raising revenue that can be used to fund vital health care services and tobacco cessation and prevention programs.

ONA supports at least a \$2 increase in Oregon's cigarette tax. Not only would this generate an estimated \$144.56 million a year in additional revenue, this would create an estimated \$16.3 million in Medicaid savings over the next 5 years.⁴ We recommend that this go to health programs including the Oregon Health Plan and at least 10% be dedicated to public health prevention programs.

With e-cigarette use becoming increasingly popular, ONA also supports the World Health Organization's recommendation to regulate e-cigarettes the same way traditional cigarettes are regulated, particularly considering that these products are not free of potentially toxic emissions.⁵ The Oregon Health Authority has found that non-cigarette tobacco use is 80% higher than traditional cigarette use for 11th graders in Oregon⁶ and youths who use electronic cigarettes are almost twice as likely to have intentions to smoke conventional cigarettes as those who had never used electronic cigarettes.⁷ Young people are particularly price-sensitive, which is why it's vital that Oregon increase the tax on *all* tobacco and nicotine products, including e-cigarettes.

¹ OHA Tobacco Fact Sheet 2014

² 1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, The Health Consequences of Smoking: 50 Years of Progress. A Report of the Surgeon General, 2014.

³ Cancer Action Network, New Revenues, Public Health Benefits & Cost Savings from a \$2.00 Cigarette Tax Increase in Oregon

⁴ Cancer Action Network, New Revenues, Public Health Benefits & Cost Savings from a \$2.00 Cigarette Tax Increase in Oregon

⁵ World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems and Electronic Non-Nicotine Delivery Systems, August 2016

⁶ OHA Tobacco Fact Sheet 2014

⁷ National Youth Tobacco Survey. 2013. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

As direct care providers for many Oregonians who suffer from chronic illness as a result of tobacco and nicotine use and patients struggling to quit smoking, Oregon's nurses urge your support of establishing an e-cigarette tax and raising the cigarette tax by at least \$2.00.