



**Association of
Oregon Counties**

DATE: April 24, 2017
TO: House Committee on Health Care
FROM: Stacy Michaelson, Association of Oregon Counties
SUBJECT: SB 754-A

Chair Greenlick, Members of the Committee:

For the record, I'm Stacy Michaelson, Health & Human Services Policy Manager for the Association of Oregon Counties. We represent county government collectively, and have a vested interest in public health issues as our county boards have statutory responsibility for acting as the Local Public Health Authority (LPHA). Our commissioners and judges have a responsibility to look out for the health of their communities and take measures to protect population health, but they are also concerned about individual health impacts.

As such, AOC has taken a strong stance in support of SB 754-A. Research shows that the brain is most susceptible to nicotine addiction prior to age 21. Our hope is that by raising the age to purchase tobacco to 21, we will see fewer smokers among current adolescents and future generations. SB 754-A will also alleviate pressure on older high school students who currently get requests from under-age classmates to purchase tobacco products for them.

From a regulatory standpoint, having a single age for purchasing tobacco, alcohol, and cannabis makes things cleaner. Store clerks only need to remember one birth year and law enforcement will face fewer instances of needing to determine if an individual possesses cannabis as opposed to tobacco. From a health perspective, doing what we can to delay the uptake of addictive habits that have a negative health impact is an important step toward improving health outcomes.

As you know, because of our diverse membership, AOC can be a bit across the board in our stances on bills. SB 754-A has not been a partisan issue among our members nor one that reflects an urban-rural divide. In fact, it has been some of our rural, libertarian-leaning commissioners who have been some of the strongest advocates on this issue. Those who have smoked and battled that addiction themselves are eager to do what they can to prevent other young Oregonians from experimenting with a habit that we now know to have severe health consequences.

A lot of good work has gone into this bill, and we urge your passage of a clean SB 754-A. Thank you.