

5/10/2017

Good Morning Chair and members of the committee,

On behalf of the March of Dimes, I am here in support of House Bill 2056. Tobacco use during pregnancy is one of the leading predictors of low birth weight and premature birth. One of the most effective ways to reduce tobacco use is by increasing the price of tobacco products.

Prenatal and postnatal environmental smoke exposure have proved devastating for the developing fetus as well as for young children. Exposure to tobacco smoke in utero or in the environment after birth has been linked to increased incidence of respiratory infections, ear infections, and behavioral disorders. Children and infants who are exposed to prenatal maternal smoking and in-home environmental tobacco smoke have a high incidence of severe asthma. Children and infants are often hospitalized longer for asthma and respiratory infections when compared to children who are not exposed to tobacco.

If these complications were not enough, tobacco use during pregnancy increases the risks of premature birth by more than 50 percent and low birth-weight by as much as 90 percent. Babies born with these complications average \$49,000 in medical costs during the first year, compared to \$4,500 for a birth without complications.

In Oregon, 10.6 percent of pregnant women used tobacco during the last three months of pregnancy. Women between 18 and 24, the most price sensitive age group, had a significantly higher prenatal smoking rate, above 18 and a half percent. The women most deterred from smoking by this bill are also the ones most likely to smoke during pregnancy.

If Oregon will not raise the price of using tobacco, then Oregon will pay the price to care for the premature and low birth weight children that result. Half of Oregon's births are paid for by Medicaid, and pregnant women on Medicaid are over five times more likely to smoke during pregnancy. The state is paying a disproportionate share of the financial cost of prenatal smoking.

Failure to decrease the use of tobacco and environmental tobacco exposure will cause continued poor health outcomes for mothers, infants, and children.

The March of Dimes supports legislative and regulatory action to reduced exposure to tobacco smoke among pregnant women and infants. We ask that you support HB 2056, and look forward to working with you to ensure that all babies are given the best chance at a healthy start in life.